COACH AND BUS WEEK

CBW

12 JANUARY 2006
ISSUE 712

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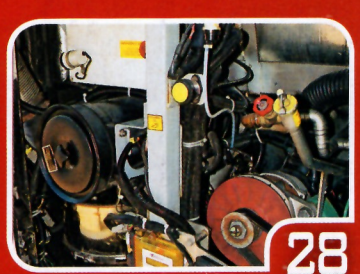
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CPT LENDS ITS WEIGHT T

Transport body plans to take fight to Westminster

THE CONFEDERATION of Passenger Transport has become involved in the ongoing disputes between Kent County Council and its contracted operators.

The issue in December of revised contract conditions and concerns over the operation of the council's arm-length commercial operating company (News, *CBW* January 5) have come to the attention of CPT, which attended a crisis meeting last year and is now considering approaching MPs to break any deadlock.

CPT's statement to *CBW* says it is concerned that "an unfortunate atmosphere of mistrust" may result from the dispute, and it is working with a group of local operators to help broker a better situation.

"Concerns began to be voiced in early September 2005 about the activities of KCC's commercial services unit by several CPT members," says the statement. "CPT has been advising members in relation to concerns about the way some contracts have been awarded to the KCC commercial unit.

"These concerns relate to what our members consider to be an uneven playing field, particularly where there are inevitable questions about availability of commercially sensitive information between two sections of the same organisation. CPT has also been contributing advice to members over revised contract conditions

CHALKWELL'S NEW CLAIM

A KENT operator is claiming a paper trail of letters suggest two contracts were retendered before he'd had a chance to accept new contract conditions.

Clive Eglinton (right), MD of Chalkwell Coach Hire, originally alleged that he was not asked to retender because he questioned the new contract conditions (see News, CBW January 5). But he now says the die was cast BEFORE he'd responded.

A letter dated December 2, 2005, from KCC began the paper trail. It asked Chalkwell to formally accept the new conditions. That letter arrived at Chalkwell on December 7.

Chalkwell responded to the KCC letter on December 12, but it has now emerged that the retendering process for the two schools contracts began on December 7, several days BEFORE the council received Chalkwell's response.

The closing date for tenders was December 16, and on December 22, parents of children on the services were told the contract had been retendered.

KENT MINIBUS CONTRACTS 'UNINSURABLE'

AN OPERATOR running special needs contracts for Kent County Council has had to stop because his insurers won't cover KCC's contract conditions.

The minibus operator – who did not want to be named – says he can find no insurer willing to indemnify against all liabilities, as laid out in KCC's contracts, issued without consultation in December: "In fact, our current insurers said there was no way we should be doing the contracts we had," the operator told *CBW*.

"By the time the new contracts arrived, we'd been carrying children for some time. When I received the new contract conditions, I contacted the insurer and asked if we could get cover. They said it wasn't possible so I notified KCC of the problem.

"They replied three weeks later, taking the work off us. But they told the parents of the children we were not willing to cover the work, which wasn't the case."

PTEs 'MISSING THE POINT' SAYS CPT

THE CPT says two PTEs' moves to instigate Quality Contracts in their areas means they are missing the point over improving bus services.

Both South Yorkshire PTE and Nexus have taken adverts in this week's Official Journal of the European Union inviting expressions of interest in Quality Contracts. These give local authorities total control over bus services in their areas.

David Brown, passenger services director at SYPTE, says, "We are now entering the next phase of the process of exploring each of the available options to bring improved bus services and halt the decline we've seen over recent years."

But CPT director general Brian Nimick said: "These advertisements show the PTEs are still missing the point about improving bus services – everybody knows the only route to making buses faster and more reliable is to act decisively against traffic congestion caused by cars, and to build more bus lanes. For this reason they will deliver nothing to the passenger."

● Full story in next week's *CBW*.

O KENT DISPUTE

and there have been several exchanges in recent weeks between members and KCC which have been developing the position on both sides.

"John Burch from CPT attended the operator meeting in Kent (mentioned in last week's *CBW*) as a guest of member Chalkwell Coaches. John Burch has been dealing with similar issues in three other parts of the UK and will continue to advise members in Kent following their concerns there."

It is believed that, at the meeting, around 15 operators were represented, running around 350 vehicles. The CPT statement continues: "Currently an information-gathering exercise is under way and John would be interested to hear of similar concerns elsewhere.

"The main concern at this stage, is that at a time when we are all being encouraged to consult and discuss issues with our employees and customers, it appears this example frequently does not apply when authorities wish to make fundamental changes to their relationships with bus and coach operators.

"This is breeding an unfortunate atmosphere of mistrust which needs to change."

CONCORDAT YIELDS SIX NEW WEST END BAYS

THEATRE trips into London have been made easier by six new coach bays created in the West End.

Prolonged negotiations between the Confederation of Passenger Transport, Transport for London and Westminster City Council have resulted in four new dedicated coach bays in Russell Street, behind the Drury Lane Theatre, and two more on the Strand.

The recently-launched Coach Concordat (CBW December 15) is credited with having contributed to the debate, and TfL's coach manager, Darek Podwiazka, says it will ensure open debate for more breakthroughs.

"We welcome and fully support this initiative, as it is an important step in the building of good relationships between operators and local authorities," said Mr Podwiazka. "The Concordat has the potential to explore further schemes and deliver more on-street parking provision for coaches in the Capital."

The CPT's coach consultant, Bob Pilbeam, added: "This has been the result of a lot of hard work by all concerned, and with the help of the Concordat, is hopefully the start of an improved spirit of co-operation."

This success follows the launch of new parking bays located on Horseferry Road and Warwick Row. There are also 24 parking bays in Kingsway, available for late evening waiting and pick-ups.

● Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has praised coach operators for cutting coach traffic through its residential areas by a third.

Coaches had been using Abingdon and Scarsdale Villas, near the Copthorne Tara and Kensington Close hotels, as a through route but an appeal to operators to avoid these areas resulted in a 34% drop in coach traffic last August, and a further 9% fall when monitored in November.

"This shows local authorities the coach trades are responsible and reasonable," said CPT coaching consultant Bob Pilbeam. "But we need to keep up the good work and ensure the number of coaches doesn't rise again."

FRANK LLOYD DIES

FRANK Lloyd of P&O Lloyd of Bagilt, in North Wales, has died aged 81.

Mr Lloyd ran the family firm, set up in 1925 by his father and uncle, with the help of his sons David and John, although John left to pursue other interests in the 1990s.

The company, which runs contracts, private hire and stage carriage work, will continue from its base at Rhydwen Garage.

Mr Lloyd's funeral will be next Tuesday, January 17 at St Mary's Parish Church, Bagilt, at 1200 hrs, followed by internment at New Brighton Cemetery, Bagilt.

Donations can be made to the British Heart Foundation or Holywell Community Hospital, direct to funeral director Alun Andrew, in Mostyn, or on the offertory plate at the service.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT

THERE are a number of minibus operators in Ireland wondering whether they are operating illegally or not following the Department of Transport's decision to implement new speed limiter legislation.

The problem doesn't affect 16-seaters, which have routinely been fitted with limiters set to 100kph since the start of 2005 (at least, those built in Ireland). But there has been little indication, say Irish operators, that nine-seaters and above would also have to have them.

However, this latest minor bombshell has brought sharply into focus the absurdity of Ireland's bus and coach speed limits. For no matter what your speed limiter is set at, you're still stuck with a maximum 80kph on the roads.

I wonder how many UK operators fully brief their tour drivers on this anomaly; maybe they just trust them to read the road signs carefully, as I'm sure they do.

Ireland is not alone in having speed limits set at some distant time for reasons unrelated to road safety, and with regard to vehicle standards which manufacturers have long improved on. Better brakes, better tyres, better roads, better training and rising customer expectation must all be good reasons for government's everywhere to reappraise the upper limits.

Don't get me wrong; I'm all for even lower limits where there's a need for caution. On the other hand, what's the point in designing motorways and junctions for 21st century traffic while sticking to 20th century limits which, in the case of the UK, were set not to save lives but save fuel...

● The ongoing consolidation of the bus market, with Stagecoach getting Yorkshire Traction and now Transdev getting its mitts on Blazefield, seems to suggest there's still some margin in big-scale business. But it would be all too easy to read too much into the changes, and assume that clumping is the only way forward. In fact, there has been a notable increase in the number of small, independent operators registering a route or two, either via tendered work or old-fashioned inventiveness.

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
EDITOR

REGISTRATIONS BEAT MID-YEAR BLUES

Final figures up by almost 5% on previous year

MARTIN COLE, CBW TECHNICAL AND MINIBUS EDITOR

FINAL year-end registration figures for coaches and buses closed 4.6% higher than 2004 against all predictions following the mid-year slump.

Data supplied by the Society of Motoring Manufacturers and Traders shows the year started brightly and showed great promise but a quiet spell in the middle months say registrations fall considerably – causing some doubt of the ability of the market to maintain even a level par with 2004. December's monthly overall increase of 2.9% lifted the number of vehicles registered to 352 units. The annual total for 2005 was 4,198 units compared with 4,012 in 2004.

Volvo remained firmly ahead in the market with more than double the number of vehicles registered than nearest rival Alexander Dennis. Volvo also confidently topped individual coach and bus sectors and was 27.22% ahead of its 2004 performance.

Alexander Dennis made a strong recovery but so far has failed to regain the former TransBus impetus – although the performance on paper does not include the many vehicles the company supplies to Far East markets or to North America.

Coach registrations for Alexander Dennis have been lacklustre in terms of the R-Series but the platform may now become more secured in the knowledge that Cummins is not now withdrawing the ISM engine and will take the platform to Euro 4. Javelin sales remained reasonably robust thanks to long-term MoD contracts.

Scania also continued to improve its performance despite the monthly comparison dropping by 38.57%. Total registrations reached 537 units against 473 last year. Scania Bus & Coach MD Geoff Bell said the number would have been higher but it had not been possible to register everything ahead of the Christmas break.

Optare closed strongly with registrations up 12.32% to 517 units and Irisbus jumped by 54.24% as its figures increased substantially to close at 364 compared with 236 last year.

MAN maintained a stable pattern and finished just three units lower than last year with 110. It's new double decker chassis is set to enter series production before the end of 2006 and MAN will be intending to carve itself a fresh slice from the UK market.

Bova returned another excellent set of results virtually all down to the seemingly dateless Futura model and the weight advantages it offers. The remod-

COACH

Manufacturer	Dec-05	Dec-04	YTD 05	YTD 04
Volvo	20	27	371	317
Scania	24	32	186	199
Irisbus	19	14	186	145
Mercedes-Benz	4	3	66	83
Bova	0	2	58	80
Setra	1	1	42	51
VDL Bus	4	1	34	7
MAN	0	0	36	35
Caetano Toyota	0	1	30	25
BMC	0	5	22	26
Alexander Dennis	0	0	17	5
Temsa	0	0	5	0
Van Hool	0	0	5	0
Transbus	0	0	3	27
DAF Bus	0	0	3	36
Other European	2	0	53	61
Total coaches	75	86	1,118	1,101

BUS

Manufacturer	Dec-05	Dec 04	YTD 2005	YTD 2004
Volvo	108	101	964	775
Alexander Dennis	45	40	646	217
Optare	15	40	517	422
Scania	19	38	351	274
Irisbus	18	14	178	91
Mercedes-Benz	36	0	155	175
BMC	9	4	79	50
MAN	26	4	74	78
VDL Bus	4	1	34	7
Transbus	0	3	14	671
Dennis	0	0	0	2
DAF Bus	0	1	0	123
Other European	0	0	2	0
Total buses	277	256	3,080	2,911

TOTAL

Manufacturer	Dec-05	Dec-04	YTD 2005	YTD 2004
Volvo	128	128	1,335	1,092
Alexander Dennis	45	40	663	222
Scania	43	70	537	473
Optare	15	40	517	422
Irisbus	37	28	364	236
Mercedes-Benz	40	3	194	225
VDL Bus	5	12	134	40
MAN	26	4	110	113
BMC	9	9	101	76
Bova	0	2	58	80
TransBus	0	3	17	698
Van Hool	0	0	5	0
DAF Bus	0	21	3	145
Dennis	0	0	0	6
Other British	1	0	1	0
Other Imports	3	2	159	170
Total	352	342	4,198	4,012

CONTINUED EXPANSION FOR EXCEL PASSENGER LOGISTICS

FLIGHT Delay Services, a subsidiary of Excel Passenger Logistics, has been granted a 20 vehicle operator licence at its Manchester Airport base.

Managing director Sandy Martin said: "We are looking forward to this next exciting phase in the company's development. Since becoming part of the Excel Group in 2004, the expansion of the company has been nothing short of remarkable.

"We now arrange emergency transportation, accommodation and meals for over 35 airlines serving every major airport in the UK and it is logical for us to start operating our own vehicles."

Tony Knight has joined the company as operations manager. Formerly with Airport Cars, he has wealth of experience within Manchester Airport.

Group MD Graham Hayden said: "We have established excellent relationships with many operators in and around the Manchester area and will continue to work with them as we expand our services to the airline industry.

"Nevertheless, the sheer volume of work being generated at Manchester made it logical to set up our own operation. Initially, some coaches will be transferred from our Stansted base, bu orders for new coaches to our usual high specification will be placed shortly."

Group development manager Bill Hiron added: "Initially we will have a core operation of five or six coaches based at Manchester, but we are actively looking for tendered bus services in the area – so watch this space!"

Bova's Magiq should help the Dutch firm to build on this year's results

elled Magiq has rejoined the stable alongside Futura yet it may serve to attract more new buyers than to impact on the Futura's market share.

BMC's growing range of imported products has now started to gain momentum and the company closed 32.89% up with 101 vehicles registered.

Mercedes-Benz, troubled by a shortage of new tenders in London, saw a late change in fortune when the market suddenly rallied and it has made some significant gains in the independent bus operator market. It's new Tourino midicoach has sparked considerable interest and may provide a healthy boost to overall EvoBus coach sales this year.

ACT to oversee Nottingham's 'freedom card'

NOTTINGHAM City Council has appointed ACT (Applied Card Technologies) to provide a managed service for its ITSO HOPS/AMS (Host Operator Processor System/ Asset Management System) and will forge ahead quickly to implement 'freedom card' as one of the first ITSO schemes in the country.

The process will migrate the existing inter-operable 'freedom card' to the new ITSO system to create greater flexibility of use and the opportunity to expand into inter-modal operations and integrated ticketing to assist customers in achieving seamless travel and other benefits.

Currently NCC has more than 110,000 card holders.

Awards deadline

ENTRIES for the sixth annual National Transport Awards, organised by The Centre for Transport Policy at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, should be submitted by Friday 3 February.

There are four categories: for local authorities; public transport operators and transport consultants and a section open to anybody.

Visit www.*rgu*.ac.uk for more information.

ROSCO recognises driving excellence in Oldham

ROSCO – the Road Operators' Safety Council – has recognised the achievements of 17 drivers based at First's Wallenshaw Street depot in Oldham.

The drivers have clocked up a remarkable 463 years of safe driving between them and each one has a minimum of 25 years without a driving accident. One of the team has clocked up 32 years, another 31 years and three have 29 years to their credit.

First's service delivery director for Greater Manchester, Bob Mason, said: "Everyone at the Oldham depot is delighted ROSCO has recognised the tremendous record of these 17 drivers. It's no easy task to remain calm and in control when driving a bus in today's congested traffic. Their achievements over a long period amply display true professionalism and dedication. They deliver a safe and secure journey for all their customers and are a splendid example for everyone – and deserve hearty congratulation."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ray calls it a day after 42 years on the buses

LONG-SERVING busman Ray Ramsey has called it a day after 42 years driving for Stagecoach East and its predecessor United Counties.

Ray worked up until Christmas, finishing on 23 December. He had joined United Counties at the age of 17 in 1963 – as assistant to the area traffic superintendent. From there he took a varied path – working in scheduling, licensing operations and also had a number of managerial positions with United Counties and Stagecoach. Since 2003 he had been tenders and contracts manager based in Northampton.

Planning to retire before he was 60, Ray has cut it close at 59½. He built up a wealth of knowledge and experience which he has been able to pass on to many of his colleagues throughout the years.

Scraggs in the news

STOKE bus and coach operator Scraggs was in the local press last week apparently accusing First Bus of trying to run it off the road with its ticket pricing policy. But Scraggs operations director Peter Gibson tells *CBW* that The Sentinel – no friend of First – got the wrong end of the stick. First recently dropped its TwoTrip ticket in the city, but retains return tickets on the route where it competes with Scraggs. First says this is for "historic" reasons.

Competiton winner

THE lucky winner of our Have I Got News For You competition, carried in the Christmas issue, was Andrew Quinsee, coach operations manager for Norfolk County Services. Andrew correctly identified the missing words from the recent round of the TV news quiz show as 'coach parking charges' and his name was the first drawn from the CBW hat. He wins a model bus.

FREE FARES SCHEME 'UNFAIR'

Passenger watchdog says councils will force price rises

ANDREW PEACE, CBW REPORTER

BUS USERS UK is calling the free fares scheme for disabled and elderly passengers unfair and unsustainable. It says because the government money intended for the scheme is not ring-fenced then councils can and will divert it to other services, forcing bus companies to increase fares or reduce services to make up the shortfall.

Under the new scheme, disabled passengers and the over 60s will be able to use buses for free between 09:30 – 23:00 from 1 April 2006.

The government announced £350m in extra funding but did not stipulate that the money should only be used to support the free travel scheme. The organisation says there is no obligation on councils to reimburse bus companies for carrying these passengers.

"The money that should be used for revenue support funding should be ring-fenced so it cannot be used for anything else," says Bus Users UK president Dr Caroline Cahm.

"It is manifestly clear to me that local authorities already do not have enough money to support the services that people need, and that bus services may well lose out to other priorities like schools and hospitals."

"Also the reimbursement is not equivalent to the lost fare, it is just a percentage. If councils cannot, or choose not to, recompense them properly they will have to make up any shortfall some other way. They might choose to increase fares for other passengers, reduce services or both."

She says it is hard to object to a scheme that gives free travel to pensioners, but that in practise the disadvantages will outweigh the advantages.

"It is favouring one section of the community at the expense of the other and the cost is enormous," she continues. "It is vital to consider other bus users – like families on low incomes – as much as senior citizens. The proposed system is unfair and unsustainable."

In Scotland and Wales users are entitled to free trips anywhere in the country but in England users are only entitled to free travel within their own boroughs – unless the district has agreements with neighbouring authorities.

NEXUS CUTS SERVICES

NEXUS held a press conference on Tuesday to announce cuts to services in the north east because of a £7.3m shortfall in funding for concessionary travel.

It presented four options, including a 2% rise in council tax, or using £2m of its own reserves along with swingeing cuts to school and secured services.

Nexus director general Mike Parker told *CBW*, "All is not lost, we've had lots of discussions with government and they are on the case, but this is a very real proposal and the government accepts that. It's absurd that free travel for pensioners may mean their services are withdrawn to pay for the measure."

Nexus says the formula used to calculate each region's allocation of the fund is "automatically flawed" as it uses demographic data rather than direct reimbursement of cost.

ARRIVA TAKES OVER FIRST SERVICES

ARRIVA North West & Wales has stepped in to fill the void, this week, after FirstBus withdrew a number of Cheshire and Wirral services. Routes from Chester, Ellesmere post and Birkenhead were withdrawn, as First PMT downsized its Crosville operations and moved to close its Ellesmere Port depot.

First PMT commercial director Paul De Santis told CBW that the company had identified a number of under-performing and marginal services. He said that the company was also faced with a question mark over the future of Ellesmere Port depot when the lease on the Wellington Road site expires in March. It could either search for a new location, or try to purchase the existing one, but that would have involved considerable cost, and would have included costly environmental surveys.

"Some of the routes were loss makers and we couldn't move all the Ellesmere Port vehicles to Chester depot because of space constraints" he said. The depot closure is still being negotiated with staff, but the allocation of 20 has dropped to about seven in the interim.

Services taken over by Arriva this week will involve around 17 peak vehicles and include routes from Ellesmere Port to Little Sutton, and to Kendal Drive, Clatterbridge Hospital to Leasowe, Birkenhead to Beechwood, Chester to Runcorn and to West Kirby.

Cheshire County Councillor John Burke, Executive Member for Highways and Transportation said, "We are delighted that Arriva has been able to work with us to ensure that services will continue. Arriva and the County Council's Transport Co-ordination Service have reacted with commendable speed to ensure that bus services are maintained in Ellesmere Port, Neston and Chester".

DRIVER 'CRITICAL' AFTER CRASH

A DRIVER for Terravision is still seriously ill in hospital following a crash in London which ended with his Scania Irizar embedded in the front of a restaurant.

Police are now appealing for witnesses to the accident. Twenty passengers were aboard the vehicle, and nine suffered minor injuries. The driver of a Ford Escort was also seriously hurt.

The coach was on Italian-owned Terravision's Stansted-Victoria express link, passing through Whitechapel at around 3am on January 5. It is believed the vehicle was in collision with the car before hitting the restaurant front.

The driver of the coach, believed to be in his 30s, had to be cut from the vehicle before being taken to hospital. His condition is said to be 'critical.' Nobody at Terravision – which runs services from Stansted and Luton as well as from many Italian airports – would comment to the Press. VOSA is inspecting the vehicle this week.

Blackburn Transport fate to be decided

AFTER nearly six months of uncertainty as to the future of Blackburn Transport, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council members are due to meet in February to continue discussing the transport company's fate.

During negotiations with Blackburn Transport staff members in August 2005, information was leaked to the local press indicating that the company was up for sale.

This followed Blackburn Transport's announcement of a loss for the third year running. The company, owned by Blackburn with Darwen Council, was £74,536 in the red for the year to March 2005. That compares with losses of £68,233 in March 2004 and £462,243 in March 2003, both of which were attributed to the company's battle with the now-defunct Buzy Bus firm. The 2005 loss is put down to rising fuel costs.

At the time Managing Director Michael Morton said the figures should be interpreted as a year-on-year improvement in normal trading.

Blackburn with Darwen Council is offering up to 90 per cent of Blackburn Transport for sale to big companies, and is due to decide if it should go through with the sale. The proposal has split the ruling Labour group and a T&G 'Don't Sell Blackburn Borough Transport – keep Blackburn buses ours' campaign was started in August.

Only a handful of Blackburn Transport's bus services are profitable with the money raised from those used to support a dozen more.

Flying colours

GO NORTH EAST is repainting its entire 450-strong low floor bus fleet in this new livery in a four year project that will use 150,000 gallons of paint. The timescale ensures that there will be no disruption to services. The new livery uses flowing lines to move away from the 'box-on-wheels' look and uses bright colours to attract the eye.

GNE says the success of its website and new customer services team means that it can take posters and flyers off the windows for a cleaner and brighter interior too.

Museum move held up by red tape

THE Cobham Bus Museum was hoping to move from an ageing 1940s warehouse to modern facilities at Brooklands, but the dream move has been put on hold after "chronic mistakes" in Elmbridge Borough Council's planning report.

The London Bus Preservation Trust was depending on cash from the sale of their current site to finance the move. The Trust had the sale agreed with a developer who was seeking planning permission from the Council to build three homes on the site.

Now the developer, Huf Haus, has been forced to withdraw its planning application to give them time to rebut the errors in the report.

The Bus Museum fear the delay could cost the charity as much as £20,000 to £30,000.

Mind your language

STAFF at Leigh bus station have become among the first in Greater Manchester to be able to work in nearly 150 different languages.

A new system has been installed in the GMPTE Travelshops at the bus station to allow employees to have conversations with people who do not speak English. The free Language Line service enables customers to have a conversation with a member of staff through an interpreter on the telephone.

Violence on the rise

PUBLIC transport has seen a dramatic rise in reported incidences of violence. In South Wales the number of violent attacks on public transport increased by 13% in the last 12 months.

Government statistics indicate there were 104 recorded victims of violence on public transport across the area in 2004/05. This compares with 92 incidents of violent crime during the previous year.

The figures show incidents recorded by British Transport Police have risen steadily since 2002/03 when 84 such incidents were reported in South Wales. Nationally, the number of violent crimes recorded on public transport has risen by 23% since 2002/03 - reaching 6,236 last year.

An alarming statistic shows incidents in Essex have more than tripled over the last six years.

Figures indicate a 341% increase in the number of violent crimes involving passengers on the county's transport system. In 1999/2000 there were 51 reported violent crimes compared with 102 in 2002/2003 and 174 for 2004/2005.

NEWS ROUND-UP

RICHMOND-UPON-THAMES has been granted £5.4m for transport improvements from TfL, £495,000 of which will be used to improve facilities for buses with new accessible bus stops... **SHEFFIELD'S** plans to install a 'quality bus corridor' in the city have received a setback after the first phase of the plan – a bus lane - was dropped after resistance from residents. Phases two and three – a mini-interchange and changes in the road layout to improve journey times – are now also under pressure. A local councillor called it a, "victory for people power"... Councillors in **CANTERBURY** are considering a plan to create park-and-ride sites for a school bus scheme to tackle congestion in the city – inspired by the Queen's Speech which said authorities should have the freedom to develop school bus schemes that meet the needs of communities. The plan uses three existing sites in the city. Parent's views are being sought... Residents in **ST IVES** are being canvassed for their views on the council's transport plans. A public consultation will be held at the Golden Lion Hotel on January 20, 21, and 23. The plans are various but centre around giving people, "high quality alternatives to the car"... **YORK** is pressing ahead with its £3m plan to be the first city to introduce the hi-tech new First Bus FTR, although some 400 residents have protested against proposals to restrict on-street parking to provide unimpeded routes for the new vehicles. Bus patronage is booming in the city as infrastructure improvements are delivered – phase two, upgrading bus stops and improving junction lay-outs, will go before the city council this week.

TRANSDEV BUYS BLAZEFIELD GROUP

Owners to get estimated £25m

ANDREW JAROSZ, CBW CORRESPONDENT

WEST Yorkshire based Blazefield Group, operating some of the last remnants of the National Bus Company not in listed group hands, has been acquired by French-owned group Transdev in a deal that sees owners Giles Fearnley and Stuart Wilde pick up an estimated £25m.

Transdev's UK operations comprise London United, London Sovereign (which it acquired earlier from Blazefield), Bournemouth Transport as well as an 18% stake in Nottingham City Transport. It also operates the Nottingham Express Transit jointly with NCT and is involved in the forthcoming Edinburgh tram system. The addition of a further 300 vehicles will take the combined fleets to more than 1,200 vehicles.

Blazefield's chief executive Giles Fearnley and managing director Stuart Wilde are staying with their Group for at least two years with Transdev's Charlie Beaumont becoming Blazefield Group chairman.

Giles Fearnley told *CBW* the two owners wanted to control the process of selling, and one of the conditions was that they would stay on with the company.

He said: "We have great admiration for the way that Transdev operates in the UK, in terms of high quality and working hard at relationships, and this can only strengthen our operations. We intend to stay with the business and neither of us will be walking away from the people that work for Blazefield and have been instrumental in our success."

Blazefield Group was formed in 1991, when Fearnley and Wilde picked up the remnants of the AJS Group from their former employer, which included three West Yorkshire subsidiaries formed from the broken up West Yorkshire Road Car which was privatised in 1987. Interests in the south included Cambridge Coach Services and Sovereign Bus.

A succession of buying and selling, which also included Huntingdon Bus operations acquired from Stagecoach, saw Blazefield eventually leave the South, but expansion into Lancashire came in 2001 in the purchase of Stagecoach operations in Blackburn, Bolton and Burnley.

The Blazefield duo were also co-founders with six others, of Prism Rail, which operated a number of train franchises, became stock market listed, and eventually sold to national Express group in 2000. For part of that time, Mr Fearnley was chairman of the Association of Train Operating Companies.

Currently, Blazefield operates five companies with a turnover of £33m – Burnley & Pendle, Harrogate & District, Keighley & District, Lancashire United and Yorkshire Coastliner, which, last year, with a turnover of £3.5m, was named as the number one UK profit maker with a rate of return of 27%.

Globally Transdev carries more than one billion passengers a year in 100 local transport networks across France, Germany, Australia, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Its total UK turnover in 2004 was £152.4 million; global turnover was £1,327 million.

NEW FD AT DUNN-LINE

DUNN-LINE has appointed a new finance director following the departure of Paul Savidge, who helped steer the company during its recent development.

Brian Geldart

Brian Geldart, 47, takes the post and that of company secretary. Mr Geldart has long experience of management at both small and large companies in his career. His appointment began on January 3.

"We are confident that our team is robust enough to deliver our short, medium and long-term strategies, and move Dunn-Line to the position where we believe it belongs," said company chairman Bob Dunn.

"With regards to site relocation, we have various options at present, and some more details will be released in due course."

WEST COAST GETS GLASGOW CITYBUS

WEST COAST Motors has bought Glasgow Citybus, acquiring its vehicles and assets together with a leased depot in South Street, Glasgow.

Established in 1999 by Russell Arden, Citybus has grown from four vehicles to 16, and has 23 staff. All transfer to the new owners, with Mr Arden becoming general manager of the business.

"One of the main attractions of the business was the depot, which has a well-equipped maintenance facility," said West Coast Motors MD Colin Craig – the third generation of Craigs, which set up the limited company Craigs of Cambeltown now trading as West Coast Motors. "The depot will give us support for our Glasgow operations both now and going forward."

West Coast Motors now has a fleet of 126 vehicles, around 40 of which are coaches. The coach fleet works exclusively on a variety of express services, many for Scottish Citylink.

Fire safety law action

What to do when the law changes

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OPERATORS STUNNED

● No notice given to operators ● Regulation 'slipped in' over Christmas

GABRIEL CONWAY, CBW IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

OPERATORS in Ireland have expressed "stunned amazement" over a new law which they say has been sneaked in.

In fact the Coach Tourism & Transport Council (CTTC) didn't even know about the new speed limiter law until *CBW* told them about it.

The new regulations require the fitment of speed limiters to buses and coaches of under 10 tons, backdated to cover vehicles registered in 2005.

The new regulations announced by the Department extend the current neccessity for speed-limiters on larger PSV vehicles to include those in the under 10-ton bracket, previously exempt. The previous regulations, in force since 1994) required that goods vehicles with a maximum mass exceeding 12 tonnes and buses with a maximum mass exceeding 10 tonnes must be fitted with speed limiters.

Vehicles coming within the scope of compulsory speed limiter control for the first time as a direct consequence of the new regulation (which implement the European Communities (Installation and Use of Speed Limitation Devices in Motor Vehicles) Regulations 2005) are

- Goods vehicles with a maximum mass exceeding 3.5 tonnes but not exceeding 12 tonnes first registered on or after January 1 2005, and
- Passenger-carrying vehicles with more than 8 passenger seats with a maximum mass not exceeding 10 tonnes first registered on or after January 1 2005.

Under the Regulations, speed limiters must be set so that goods vehicles cannot exceed 90 km/h and passenger-carrying vehicles 100 km/h.

The sudden decision to introduce the new requirements over Christmas and the decision to backdate to include vehicles registered in 2005 have taken operators by surprise, and led to confusion as to whether some vehicles already on the road are now legal or not.

Adding to the confusion is that fact that although the regulations were apparently signed into force on December 3, they only became public knowledge on January 4 when details were published by the Department of transport, with no notice being given to operators or trade bodies.

"This is a complete shock to us," Cora Collins of the CTTC told *CBW*. "This call from *CBW* is the first indication we had that these regulations were being introduced, and there has been absolutely no consultation whatsoever from the Department that they were going to do this"

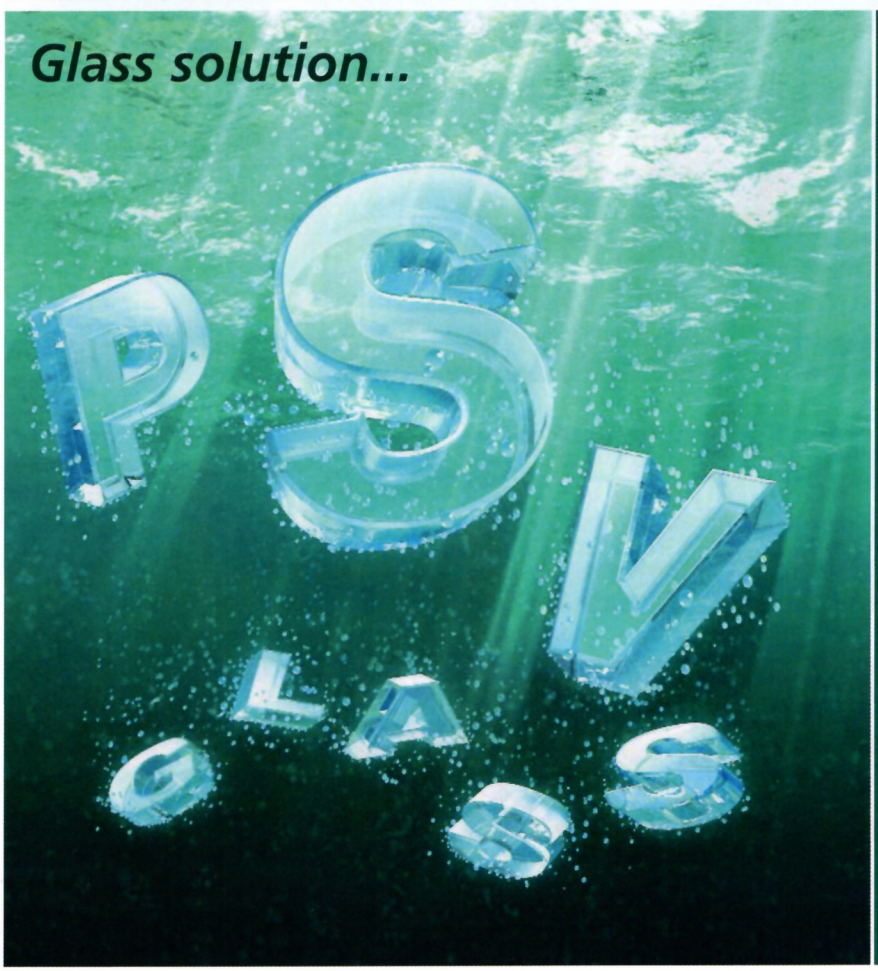
Following the call from *CBW*, the CTTC checked the notice published by the DoT, and expressed grave concerns.

Collins said: "These regulations were signed into effect over the Christmas period without anybody being notified, and the DoT is now saying that operators who do not have limiters fitted will be subject to a 3,000 euro fine.

"We've not had time to prepare our members for this, and our initial calls to a small number of operators reveals that there are a number of small coaches out there in the 12-20-seater bracket which were bought last year and do not have limiters fitted.

"What are these small operators meant to do? They can't take these coaches off the road while they look at retrofitting, but they are being told they are now subject to fines for operating them.

"It's not a small job to retrofit these devices, it will be costly for



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BY 'SNEAKY' SPEED LAW

our members, and they will lose revenue while the vehicles are off the road being fitted".

A Department of Transport statement on the matter says: "It is an offence to use a vehicle in contravention of the Regulations. Both the driver and the owner of the vehicle found to be in breach of the Regulations face a fine of up to 3,000 euros or a prison term of up to three months or both".

CBW has been in touch with the DoT in an effort to clarify issues surrounding the timing of the introduction of the new regulations, the lack of direct communication to the CTTC or operators, and the late publication (on January 4) of regulations enacted nearly two weeks earlier but, at the time of going to press, no response has been received.

Meanwhile the issue of speed-limits themselves continues to cause concern to the CTTC and its members, with a review of coach and bus speed still underway, almost a year after Transport Minister Martin Cullen told *CBW* that the matter would be resolved "very quickly".

Under the new Regulations, speed limiters must be set so that goods vehicles cannot exceed 90 kmph and passenger-carrying vehicles 100 kmph. However, the maximum speed limits applicable to these vehicles are lower than these values: HGVs and single deck buses are subject to a maximum speed limit of 80kmph with double-deck buses subject to a maximum speed limit of 65kmph.

The government's own advisory body recommended increases in the limits for buses and coaches when car limits were increased with the changeover from mph to kmph in January 2005, however despite accepting the recommendations, the changes were abandoned at the last minute.

Collins added: "We're hopeful that there will be some move on speed limits, as the Department has been consulting with our members over the last few months.

"The current system is both damaging to public transport and potentially dangerous, in that coaches are restricted to the inside lane on virtually the entire motorway network at a time when car limits have been increased, giving the private motorist a greater advantage over the coach traveller, and forcing PSV drivers to choose between being stuck behind slow-moving vehicles in the inside lane or breaking the rules by overtaking. Virtually the entire motorway network in the republic is a two-lane system, and it's unacceptable that coaches are being blocked from the outside lane by these outdated limits"

Speed limiters now compulsory on minicoaches as well as full-sized vehicles

60 MILLION EUROS – THE COST OF CONGESTION TO ONE OPERATOR

CHRONIC and worsening traffic congestion is costing Dublin Bus up to 60m euros a year, a cost which has doubled in the last four years, according to a new report by consultants BDO.

The cost of congestion to Ireland's largest urban transport operator was put at 34m euros in 2001, increasing to 49m euros in 2003 and last year reached 60m euros.

A survey by BDO found that average speeds during the morning peak hour had fallen to 12.9kmph – a drop of 11.5% since the survey was first conducted in 2001.

The average off-peak bus speed fell from 17.3kmph in 2001 to 15.4 kmph last year – a drop of 11%.

The report goes on to conclude that speeds are due to drop even more over the next two years to 12.7kmph during peak times.

"Traffic congestion is seriously undermining any increase in resources that we put into running services in the Greater Dublin Area," a company spokesman told *CBW*. "The slower the journey time, the more drivers and buses we need to maintain the same frequency of service."

The company is calling for further investment in Quality Bus Corridors, and points to the success of the Stillorgan Road QBC where the average journey time by bus is significantly quicker than by car, with bus passenger numbers up by 210% in five years.

Dublin buses are mired in congestion all day round as this off-peak photo shows

FERRY COMPANIES LOOK TO BRIGHTER FORECAST

AS the coach tourism industry gears up for another season, one particular sector will be hoping for an upturn in business during the coming months.

The traffic figures for December on the competitive Dover to Calais route are not available yet but the figures for November 2005 make for gloomy reading. A total of 5,710 coaches went through the port of Dover in the month, a 23.4% drop on the corresponding month in the previous year. It put the total number of coaches through the port from January to November at 99,331, a 16.5% drop on the 118,915 vehicles that passed through Dover in the corresponding 11 months in 2004.

The previous three months all recorded a drop of at least 16 per cent in coach traffic over the corresponding months in 2004, reflecting a tough time for operators on the short-sea route.

It is to be hoped that there is an upturn this year, even though the threat from the low budget airlines will be as strong as ever.

A lot of ferry business was lost early in the year through no fault of the operators, when the fiasco of the crippled berths at Calais severely disrupted services. Eurotunnel picked up a lot of the business and managed to hold on to the passengers in the summer months.

Of course, Hoverspeed ended services in early November, blaming rising costs and falling passenger numbers, so the current state of affairs does not look too promising. However, ferry companies are nothing if not resilient and they should be able to weather the storm, as it were.

CASTING THE TOURISM NET WIDER

THE key to successful growth in the tourism business is capturing new markets, so coach operators will be pleased to learn of a new initiative from VisitBritain that should pay dividends, particularly for the incoming market.

VisitBritain is to target new and developing markets such as Mexico with increased investment to attract more tourists. The tourist office has identified 11 areas to develop in 2006-07 including China, India, eastern European and south east Asian countries, which already are outpacing many of Britain's traditional tourism markets.

VisitBritain revealed a 2% downturn in visitors from North America to 3.75 million in the first 10 months of 2005 compared to the same period in 2004. Visitors from Western Europe were up by 11% to 16.32 million and those from the rest of the world rose by 16% to 5.42 million. Overall expenditure in the period was up eight per cent to £11.9 billion.

This gave a total in the January-October period of 25.5 million visitors, which was 10% up on the first ten months the previous year. There were a total of 27.7 million visitors in 2004.

● VisitBritain has announced a campaign to propel the visitor economy towards £100 billion by 2010.

The strategy involves using the publicity surrounding the build-up to the Olympic Games in London in 20012 to increase substantially the current £74 billion that the visitor economy is worth to the economy.

The aim is to convert growing consumer interest into action, thereby ensuring that visitors not only book trips to the UK but also make return visits and tell their friends and business acquaintances about their holiday experiences.

Possible rethink on rolling out road pricing nationwide

THE coach industry has been watching the debate about road pricing as keenly as anyone, so it will have been interested to learn of a hint of yet an apparent policy switch in the run-up to Christmas.

The Government has suggested it may stop short of rolling out road pricing across the nation, despite recently engaging the West Midlands in plans to pilot the system. Transport Minister Stephen Ladyman told a House of Commons debate that local pilots, paid for by the Government's new Transport Innovation Fund, might reduce congestion sufficiently to mean a national scheme is not required.

The suggestion will concern West Midlands businesses, some of which have expressed opposition to road pricing, fearing it will make the region less competitive than neighbouring areas that do not operate the pay-as-you-drive system.

Last year, the Government gave a clear signal it was keen for the West Midlands to pilot road pricing by giving it more than twice the amount of money it bid for to conduct a feasibility study on the scheme.

The £2.6 million will be spent, firstly, on six months' work looking at how radical congestion-busting measures would operate in the conurbation.

Unusually, the award also includes money towards implementation – a move viewed by many transport experts as a sweetener for the region's politicians to adopt road pricing.

Since London adopted congestion charging in 2002, the Department for Transport has been frustrated by a distinct lack of willingness to adopt similar schemes in other major UK cities.

Reminder about holiday health care changes

THERE are some alarming statistics around about the number of people who travel abroad without insurance, so coach operators should make sure that their passengers are aware of an important recent health care change.

Until now holders of an E111 form, available free from post offices, have been entitled to free or reduced cost medical treatment in 27 European countries. But the E111 form ran out at midnight on New Year's Eve and passengers who do not have the replacement – the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) – will have to pay for hospital care if they are unlucky enough to fall ill.

Many people believe that if they have comprehensive travel insurance they don't need an EHIC, but that's not necessarily true.

Some insurance companies may refuse to pay out on hospital treatment because they can argue that travellers should have been responsible and got hold of the EHIC form. Although essential, the EHIC is not a substitute for travel insurance because it does not provide cover for legal costs, theft or delays. Like the E111 form, the EHIC is available free from post offices. Prospective travellers may also apply at *www.dh.gov.uk/travellers*, or by telephone on 0845 606 2030.

However, unlike the E111 form, the EHIC must be verified by the Department of Health, a process that can take several days.

Leger puts its faith in pilgrimages

LEGER Holidays, one of the UK's leading providers of European coach holidays, has launched a series of Faith Tours offering pilgrimages to places such as Lourdes and the Vatican City. Prices start from £369 per person for a seven-day break. The tours take in some of Europe's holiest places and Leger has appointed specialist pastoral religious guides to lead them.

The 2006 programme includes a tour of Rome, Florence and Assisi that costs from £479 per person. The rate includes eight nights' accommodation and breakfast, six evening meals, a specialist guide and five excursions to Florence, Rome, the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel, Castel Gandalfo and Frascati, and Assisi.

The enduring legacy of the late pontiff should ensure that Leger's In the Footsteps of John Paul II is a popular tour. The nine-day tour costs from £499 per person and includes eight nights' accommodation and breakfast, six evening meals, a pastoral tour leader and four excursions to Krakow, Wadowice, Vienna and Freising.

The Lourdes and Pyrenean Highlights tour is centred on the shrine in the southwest of France and costs from £369 per person. The seven-day break comprises six nights' accommodation and breakfast, four evening meals and excursions to Lourdes and Nevers.

An upgrade to luxury Silver Service travel is available on all Faith Tours. This offers the benefits of extra space, luxury seats, fewer passengers, separate rear lounge, DVD and video, and free personal in-seat headsets, as well as porterage in all hotels.

Faith Tours are just one of Leger's innovative holidays in its new '2006 European Experiences' brochure. Also featured are new walking holidays, trips to the Monaco Grand Prix and Tour de France in Paris, opera tours and breaks for gardening enthusiasts.

Tourism show's awards

AN awards scheme is to be introduced at the Coach Tourism Show 2006, which will be held running at the Stoneleigh Exhibition Centre near Kenilworth, Warwickshire,

The awards ceremony will be held at Coventry City's Ricoh Arena and will comprise 14 awards, a dinner and cabaret. Categories of awards will include Coach Tourism European Holiday Programme of the Year, sponsored by the Albatross Travel Group, and the Coach Tourism Town of City of the Year, sponsored by the Coach Tourism Council. There also will be awards for the top cross-sea operator, UK attraction of the year, European attraction, best wholesaler, top ticket supplier, best UK holiday programme, best day excursion programme and manager of the year.

Coach Tourism Show 2006 is organized in conjunction with the British Association of Wholesale Tour Agents (BAWTA). Sean Taggart, who is chairman of BAWTA and managing director of the Albatross Travel Group, said: "These prestigious new awards are a first for the Coach Tourism Show and will add an exciting new development, making it even more important to be there in 2006.

"The awards will drive the event forward and be an integral part of promoting it to the industry and reaffirming the belief that the show is a significant date for the industry calendar."

DRIVERS REMOVED SPEED LIMITERS

Firm has fleet reduced after inspectors discover tachograph breaches

OLIVER LUFT, CBW CORRESPONDENT

A COACH firm has had its licence slashed by five vehicles after a VOSA inspector discovered two of its drivers had disconnected their vehicles' speed limiters.

A public inquiry was held at The Public Inquiry Room, Birmingham, on Monday, to consider the case of Arthur William Robinson Taxis Ltd trading as Chauffeurs of Birmingham.

The firm's directors are Steven J Robinson, and his father Arthur William Robinson, and it is based at Curdworth Garage, Kingsbury Road, Curdworth, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

The firm was called before the deputy traffic commissioner for consideration of disciplinary action under Section 17 of The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, consideration of Transport Manager's Repute under Schedule 3 of The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, and Consideration of disciplinary action under Section 28 of The Transport Act 1985.

Opening the inquiry Deputy Traffic Commissioner Lester Maddrell, said he presided over the inquiry in two capacities, firstly to consider whether to revoke, suspend or alter the conditions of the license of Arthur William Robinson Taxis Ltd trading as Chauffeurs of Birmingham.

During which he would consider the repute of Mr [Arthur William] Robinson and his repute as the traffic manager of the company.

He also stated he had to consider whether the company, which is licensed for 17 PCV vehicles, although typically only ran 9 vehicles, and employees four full time and 14 part time drivers, had complied with the code of conduct for ferrying football fans to and from matches.

Secondly, to consider whether in light of their conduct two of the firms drivers, Mr Steven Small and Mr Brian Tinkler, are entitled to hold professional driver's licenses.

WHAT THE VEHICLE EXAMINER SAID:

DOMINIC GREEN, the vehicle examiner, reported to the inquiry the results of a spot check he made to the firms premies at Curdworth Garage, Kingsbury Roared, Curdworth, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, in February last year.

Mr Green told the inquiry: "On Wednesday the 9th of February, last year, I called at the premises and I conducted a random sample of tacho sheets from November, 2004.

"On close examination of the records I noticed that some charts had been tampered with."

Mr Green told the inquiry that out of around 50 sheets, five of them had problems, which he then took into his possession.

The sheets indicated that on two occasions, November 3 and 13, 2004, driver Brian Tinkler had driven a 49-seater Scania coach at speeds which it should not have been possible for the vehicle to travel at if its speed inhibitor been properly connected.

The three other sheets indicated that a second driver, Mr Steven Small, on three occasions, on November 1, 3 and 6, had also traveled in the same vehicle at speeds which he should not have been able to reach.

Giving evidence to the inquiry Mr Green said: "The two drivers were interviewed and they both admitted disconnecting the road speed device.

"Both had previously received warning letters from their employer about doing this."

He added: "The interviews were conducted on February 21, last year. There I spoke to Mr Small, I explained the reason for the visit and cautioned him.

"I asked him how long he had been employed by Chauffeurs of Birmingham, he said nine years and he confirmed he had received instruction on drivers conduct.

"I told him the speed limiter tacho shows speeds in excess of 100 kmph and asked him 'Can you offer me an explanation why this is the case?' He replied 'I disconnected the limiter'.

"I asked 'Can you confirm that you received a written warning from your employer about doing this?' He said 'Yes'.

"I asked; 'Why did you do this?' He said

'I did the crime I'll do the time. I have let my boss down'

driver Brian Tinkler

'Just to get back quicker'. I asked where he had heard about this and he said 'Just talking to other drivers'.

"He went on to state that it was a stupid thing to do and said 'I'll never do it again'."

Mr Green added that on February 14 he called to talk to Brian Tinkler.

Mr Green said: "I asked him how long he had been employed as a driver by Chauffeurs of Birmingham, and he said almost nine years now. I asked him have you received instruction on tachograph and he replied yes.

"I asked if his vehicle is fitted with a road speed limiter device. I said the speed limiter trace shows speeds in excess of 100 kmph.

"He said 'there is nothing physically wrong with the vehicle, I just pulled the fuse out'. I asked what could be benefited by removing the fuse?' He said just to get back a bit quicker, although I never broke the road speed limit. I did the crime I'll do the time. I have let my boss down."

What the operator said:

GIVING evidence to the inquiry Mr Tinkler said: "We were in a group of drivers and one of the drivers said 'you know the vehicle you drive can go a little bit faster' and they told us what to do.

"For another 15 minutes it was not worth it, I've been driving 42 years, it was stupid.

"If we had not talked to those drivers it would not have happened. It was a one off I deeply regret it. It should never have happened."

Giving evidence to the inquiry Mr Small said: "I felt at the time and I still feel now I was not putting any passengers lives at risk. It was just my own personal use, to finish a little earlier.

He added: "It is something I regret, it won't happen again . . . I did not make much difference any way we can only use the first two lanes on the motorway, then if you come up behind a lorry you have to slow down anyway. It is not really worth it."

Giving evidence to the inquiry, Arthur Robinson said: "I had no knowledge of this. I was surprised. I have two of what I thought could be intelligent drivers . . . It is completely out of character, they are reliable and safe . . . I believe it was a one off."

His son, Steven Robinson, admitted that the company had also failed to have the tachos returned to them by a part-time employee, but that the company do chase up employees for their tachos by registered letter.

Arthur Robinson admitted, as traffic manager, he was responsible for not picking up the speed tachos problems which Mr Green detected, and he added that the company had now adopted a new checking policy and that no further problems had been detected since.

He stated that problems the firm had with the code of conduct of getting fans to and from football matches had been limited to journeys to Leeds United's Elland Road stadium, a problem he stated his firm shared with other operators, and that he had not endured problems with trips to any other clubs.

He also added that the problems had not been with any of his passengers, but with West Yorkshire Police about the timings of dropping off and collecting supporters.

He told the inquiry that he had curtailed the problem by not knowingly taking any further jobs which involved travel to Elland Road.

What the traffic commissioner said:

DEPUTY Traffic Commissioner Lester Maddrell, said: "Both are experienced, mature, drivers employed full time in the only job they know, neither have anything, in the financial sense, to gain from this transgression... I accept this was on limited occasions and I accept they will not do it again... however I can't overlook a situation where drivers have pulled fuses on speed limiters."

Each man had his entitlement to hold a people carrying vehicle license suspended for two weeks, although Mr Maddrell staggered the bans so as not to impact on the company, which only has four full-time drivers.

Mr Maddrell said the company was a family run concern that had held its license since 1993 and had never previously been before a public inquiry and that its maintenance record seems not to be bad.

He added that the company had taken action to stem the problems it had with ferrying supporters to and from football matches.

Deputy Traffic Commissioner Maddrell, said: "The undertakings this company took in 1993 under there license have been breached. This is not the worst case I have seen, however.

"I do not make a finding of the company or that Arthur William Robinson have lost their repute, although what has happened goes beyond a formal warning."

Deputy Traffic Commissioner found that the management of the company was not sufficiently robust to run 17 vehicles, so ordered that the conditions its license be varied so that at any one time it can now only run 12 vehicles.

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FORCED OUT BY LEGISLATION

From Simon Newman, Maidenhead, Berkshire

YOUR magazine dated December 15 highlights the further bombshells hitting the industry, and in particular the coaching sector of the industry which has to operate under European regulations.

Although Ann and I sold out 12 months ago, I have continued to be involved as a director of Armchair until recently and I continue to take an interest in the industry with which I have been involved for a lifetime and of which I was president many years ago.

I have been drawing attention for some time to the impact of regulations on the coaching sector in particular, and the industry in general and therefore the potential disastrous consequences.

Whilst I understand that the trade organisation has got to deal with the current Government and therefore the current Department for Transport, the time has come when there must be a much more forceful approach than the current exercise of damage limitation by Brussels, otherwise there will not be a British coach industry to serve UK requirements let alone the important and vital contribution that incoming tourism makes.

A fundamental problem which I have raised for a considerable length of time is that we operate under a different legal system. The recent bombshell will mean that UK operators will have to obey the law and our colleagues in Europe will interpret the spirit and therefore not bother. Is it not time that the Department for Transport is clearly and explicitly told that what is happening is no longer acceptable?

Add to the above the impact of maternity and paternity laws on small and medium sized companies and there will be the inevitable departure in growing numbers from our industry.

Simon Newman is a former director of Armchair

KENT TACTICS ARE NO SURPRISE

From: Nick Dasey, Walton, Norfolk

THE action taken by Kent County Council should come as no surprise to anyone in the bus industry.

About four years ago Norfolk County Services, part of Norfolk County Council, advertised for PCV drivers offering 25 hours rising to 45 hours per week.

How many school buses run for nine hours a day? Look at it another way, a private operator can run a morning and afternoon school run, a shoppers' trip in between and a subsidised evening service. So can a county council.

In Autumn 2003 John Pope, MD of First Eastern Counties, complained that it wasn't a level playing field. Well, if you don't have to make a profit and you know what the competition is bidding it never will be. You can also impose any conditions you deem necessary, ie, age limits on vehicles used, etc.

Norfolk County Services has been running park and ride services in Norwich for the last few years and no doubt they will expand their operations in the future.

Chalkwell is among the operators who have criticised Kent County Council

TAXPAYERS BEAT THE TAXMAN

Court rules taxman was wrong to use 'settlement' rules to overtax a joint shareholder

PAULA TALLON, CBW CORRESPONDENT

THE decision handed down on December 15, 2005 in the case of Jones v Garnett was a victory for the taxpayer and a blow for HM Revenue and Customs. The Court of Appeal's decision was unanimous in that the legislation at the centre of the case had no apparent policy objective and its interpretation should not be extended beyond the existing case law, case law that has been around since 1939.

WHAT WAS THE CASE ABOUT?

THE case concerned a husband and wife, Geoff Jones and his wife Diana and a company they set up, Arctic Systems Limited. They set up the company in 1992 and on the advice of their accountants the shares were issued one share to Mrs Jones and one share to Mr Jones. This is common tax planning with family businesses.

The company was used to exploit the personal services of Mr Jones as an IT Consultant. However Mrs Jones did some work in the company. She undertook all the bookkeeping, liaised with the accountants and the bank, organised insurance, dealt with the contracts and other administrative tasks.

She worked on average four or five hours per week on the company's business. Both Mr and Mrs Jones received a salary from the company on which PAYE was accounted for. Mr Jones received £8,400 per annum and Mrs Jones received £3,600 per annum.

In 1999/2000 dividends of £25,767.25 were paid to each of the shareholders. HMRC assessed Mr Jones to tax in respect of the dividend paid to Mrs Jones on the grounds that there was a settlement within the definition contained in Section 660A (1) Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. On the basis of this legislation the dividend paid to Mrs Jones was income arising under that settlement and was deemed to be the income of Mr Jones. Section 660A is re-enacted in Section 619 to 648 Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005 (ITTOIA) following a rewrite of some of the Taxes Act.

Broadly the settlements legislation is anti-avoidance which is intended to prevent an individual from gaining a tax advantage by making arrangements which divert his annual income to another person who is liable to tax at a lower rate.

In the case of Mr and Mrs Jones HMRC claimed that by allowing Mrs Jones to be an equal shareholder and not drawing most of the income as a salary Mr Jones had entered into arrangements which amounted to a settlement for the purpose of section 660 ICTA 1988. Section 660 defines a settlement as "any disposition, trust, covenant, agreement, arrangement or a transfer of assets". It was on this interpretation that HMRC assessed the dividends on Mr Jones.

The Court of Appeal found in favour of Mr Jones which went against the previous decisions by the Special Commissioners and the High Court which both had found in favour of HMRC.

The Court of Appeal said that the subscription by Mrs Jones for her share was a normal commercial transaction so no settlement arose. The Court also noted it was important that there was no contract or obligation for Mr Jones to provide his services to the company at an undervalue.

WHO DOES THIS CASE AFFECT?

THIS case concerns situations where a company is set up with the share capital owned between husband and wife or by people living together or who are closely connected, and one of the shareholders is the main income generator of the company

SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EXISTING COMPANIES?

AS a result of the previous High Court Decision many taxpayers in a similar situation to Mr and Mrs Jones may have been advised to prepare and submit their Self Assessment tax returns for the year ended April 5, 2005 based on the decision which has now been overturned by the Court of Appeal. This could mean that one spouse is paying tax on the other spouse's income. If this is the case you should "repair" the Return based on the decision passed down on December 15, 2005.

For the 2004/05 tax return you will have until January 31, 2007 to do this. However as payments on account are based on the previous year you may be making higher payments on account so you should make a claim to reduce these if you will not be "repairing" the return before January 31, 2006. Speak to your tax office on how to do this.

For taxpayers who self assessed on the basis that the case would be overturned no action is needed on their Returns.

On an ongoing basis, for individuals who are incorporating a limited company and wish to bring in a spouse (or civil partner) as a shareholder they need to ensure that the spouse (or partner) subscribes for shares in their own right and pays for those shares (in many cases this will be nominal value). Also the spouse providing the skills and services must not agree to provide these services at an undervalue to the limited company i.e. there is no contract or any other arrangement in place to do so.

If the company is set up in this way it does not constitute a settlement based on the existing legislation and the decision in the Arctic case.

WHERE FOR HMRC NOW?

THE decision was a shock to HMRC with the judge's comment that the "lack of a clearly ascertainable legislative purpose underlines the need for caution in extending the concept of settlement beyond that the scope of existing jurisprudence" and that the HMRC's position in this case was a "significant extension". In his opinion this was a "commercial situation between two adults, to which each is making a substantial commercial contribution, albeit not for the same economic value" and that "such a difference, by itself, is not enough" to bring the case into the settlement provisions.

HMRC never thought it would lose this case and the question is what will they do? Will we see changes to the rules in the 2006 Finance Bill?

Paula Tallon is director and head of Direct Tax at Chiltern plc.

What you can do...

IF you and a close associate(s) both have an equal shareholding in your company, the ruling may affect you if:

- **One of your shareholders is the main income generator for the company**
- **Your self-assessment advice was for one shareholder to be taxed on more than one dividend, or a higher proportion of the dividends than attributable**

The ruling last month overturned previous advice, in that the shareholder deemed to be the main income generator may NOT be liable to additional, non-proportionate personal taxation.

The 2004/5 tax return can be 'repaired' before January 31, 2007. Talk to your tax office.

The Rotala saga

We chart the timeline which saw two of the UK's best-known coach brands change hands twice in just over a year

THE DUST seems to have settled on the dealings which have led Flights Group and the absorbed Hallmark operation into the ownership of Rotala plc.

A stock market announcement that Central Parking System – the UK subsidiary of US-based Central Parking Corporation – has settled with AIM-quoted Rotala draws a line under a lengthy saga which involved financial warnings and huge intrigue.

According to Rotala, the prospects for Flights Group are now good but along the long and rocky road, two directors who had been central to all the transactions are ousted, lose their shareholding and face making repayments to CPC.

As *CBW* was unable to contact Stuart Lawrenson and, latterly, CPS, unravelling the complex dealings which embarrassed CPC in America was not easy.

But this week, *CBW* reporter Andrew Peace charts the troubled waters through which Flights Group sailed before finally and permanently tying up with Rotala.

John Gunn, a 'veteran venture capitalist' heads Rotala

The background

THE Flights Group was a traditional Birmingham-based family-owned coach company specialising in luxury tours until founder Ken Flight sold out to Dunn-Line in 2002. Flights was well-known and respected in the industry for its high operating standards – and eye catching liveries – and the name is still regarded with affection by many enthusiasts.

Following the SARS and foot-and-mouth outbreaks and their impact on in-coming tourism work, Dunn-Line decided to focus on more predictable business and sold Flights, for an undisclosed sum, to Centra, the London-based bus operating subsidiary of Central Parking Systems (CPS) in mid-October 2004. CPS is itself the non-American subsidiary of US car parking giant, Central Parking Corporation.

Centra had already bought the assets and orders of the Hallmark coach brand, another luxury operator with an interest in airport/ business travel, and the two firms were amalgamated to form Flights Hallmark.

Figures released by Rotala show that, as of the twelve months to 30 November 2004, Flights Hallmark earned profits of £118,293 on turnover of £4,777,180 and that Flights Corporate Transfers – the chauffeuring business – lost £165,198 on a turnover of £428,194. The other company in the group – FH Transport – does not currently trade but holds contracts with customers of the other members of the Flights Group.

At around the same time as Flights was being incorporated into Centra, a group of city businessmen headed by John Gunn, 63 – described as a "veteran venture capitalist" – were planning to start up an investment shell company specialising in transportation and parking services management. Called Rotala, it duly floated on the AIM stock exchange – the more lightly regulated sister stockmarket to the full London Stock Exchange – on 29 March 2005 and raised £3.2m for acquisitions. Its stated intention was to make its first acquisition within six months.

Less than two weeks later the company entered into a 90 day period of exclusivity with Flights Corporate and Flights Hallmark, and extended a £175,000 loan to Flights Corporate for working capital purposes. The loan was repayable on 31 December 2005 at an 8% interest rate. Rotala shares were suspended during due diligence.

However, the Flights Group was now apparently owned by a company called Spritto Nominees – controlled by Stuart Lawrenson, at that time senior vice president, Europe, of CPS. A document published by Rotala says Lawrenson acquired the group companies separately "sometime in 2004" although exactly when and how Spritto did so is not clear.

Rotala shares were readmitted to AIM on 30 August following another statement released on 9 August which detailed the proposed acquisition, and a share placement. Rotala wanted to issue just over 18.3m shares at 6.5p each, raising around £1.19m to pursue future acquisitions. The statement also said that in respect of the Flights Group deal, Stuart Lawrenson would join the board of Rotala as non-executive director.

Rotala paid for Flights Group with 46,666,667 consideration shares, and by the issue of £750,000 5% loan notes for 2007. No cash changed hands. At 6.5p per share, this initial consideration totalled £3.78m. Rotala also said it would issue 13,333,333 deferred consideration shares at 6.5p dependent on the company achieving a profit target. The combined payment would total around £4.65m.

The deal was dependent on shareholder approval at an EGM, which also included a proposal to offer Lawrenson an option on 3.7m ordinary shares and his two associates, Michael Tackley and Paul Churchman – also former CPS employees – 3.5m each.

John Gunn, the non-executive chairman of Rotala said at the time, "We are pleased to have condition-

ally secured the Flights Group of businesses, which provide Rotala with an excellent base and management team from which to grow a transport group of real scale."

What happened then?

ROTALA held an EGM at the end of August at which all the proposals were accepted but just one month later the situation had changed completely. Central Parking Corporation issued a statement on 30 September detailing problems it had discovered as the disentanglement of the Flights companies from CPS proceeded: "The Company has become aware of issues concerning certain related party transactions and accounts receivables in its United Kingdom operations. The Company is investigating this situation and believes that there may be a negative financial impact relating to these matters. The Company currently cannot provide an estimate of the financial impact of these matters."

CPC informed Rotala that the investigations "partly involve the seller of the Flights Group, Stuart Lawrenson."

Rotala's response to CPC's announcement was: "To the extent (if at all) that Rotala suffers any material prejudice as a result of matters arising out of any such investigation, it has notified Mr Lawrenson that it has a number of potential warranty and indemnity claims under the original acquisition agreements entered into with him, among others. It should also be noted that the company has the right to offset any such claims against the loan note consideration and any deferred share consideration which might otherwise have become payable."

It also said that Stuart Lawrenson would remain as non-executive director of Rotala, "for the time being".

'... certain management-level employees located in the Company's United Kingdom office appear to have engaged in unauthorised related party transactions...'

Meanwhile, despite the controversy surrounding it, trading at the Flights Group was apparently buoyant with Rotala saying that turnover was increasing by "organic growth generated by existing contracts and the addition of recent new contract wins", while warning of the impact of fuel cost increases and acknowledging its need to improve vehicle productivity. Kim Taylor, Rotala finance director, was made Rotala's chief executive officer and the company started to search for a chief operating officer.

By mid-October 2005 the situation at the Flights Group was becoming clearer. CPC released another statement on 14 October saying, "The Company and the audit committee of its Board of Directors are continuing to investigate this situation with the assistance of outside legal, accounting and forensics professionals. This investigation has revealed that certain management-level employees located in the Company's United Kingdom office appear to have engaged in unauthorised related party transactions utilizing Company assets and to have made improper and inaccurate entries to the Company's financial statements for the United Kingdom operations. As part of the investigation, the Company is evaluating its legal rights against the parties involved in the related party transactions."

At the time, CPC said it had lost between $8-10m, "consisting primarily of over-accrual of revenues and improper capitalisation of expenses."

In an end-of-year analysts' conference, Central Parking executives said a top manager in the United Kingdom had transferred transport services contracts and assets to a company that the manager owned, which then sold them to a third-party company identified as Rotala plc.

Rotala released a trading statement on 25 November saying that turnover had continued to grow but that, "the Company has through the acquisition of the Flights Companies inherited what have transpired to be a number of unsatisfactory and uneconomic commercial arrangements which have proved more problematic than originally anticipated. This may therefore result in a larger loss for the current financial period than expected originally and this will have an adverse effect on the financial results for 2005 and 2006 until such arrangements can be re-negotiated."

It said continuing discussions with CPC were taking place amicably but that any resulting legal action would be "vigorously resisted".

Rotala also announced more equity fundraising – of between £600,000 and £1.2m – at a "significant discount to the middle market price", to "augment the group's working capital". The directors proposed to underwrite £600,000 of the issue themselves.

Discussions between CPC, Rotala and the three men continued throughout December until a final settlement was reached and released to the stockmarket on 30 December

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COACH AND BUS WEEK **CBW**

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1 Year (Rest of the World), Airmail	£140

2005. The terms of the settlement are as follows:

- Agreement that once the terms of the settlement are satisfied that the dispute is over.
- No admission of guilt by any of the parties.
- Stuart Lawrenson gives up the deferred share consideration, and the £750,000 5% loan notes are no longer payable by Rotala.
- Stuart Lawrenson, Michael Tackley and Paul Churchman give up their share options (3.7m, 3.5m and 3.5m respectively) granted under the acquisition agreement.
- The initial consideration of 46,666,667 shares given to Spritto Nominees will be placed on the stock market (at around 1.3p each) and the proceeds given to CPS/ CPC.
- Rotala will issue loan notes for £800,000 to CPS/ CPC, repayable in annual instalments from 31 December 2006 – 31 December 2010.
- Rotala grants CPS a warrant over 15m shares at 1.5p per share, exercisable for a five year period.
- £920,000 was outstanding between Flights and CPS of which £650,000 has been paid. The balance will come out of the share placing announced on 25 November.
- Stuart Lawrenson will pay CPS £70,000 immediately and £60,000 within one year. Michael Tackley and Paul Churchman will pay CPS £10,000 each.
- Stuart Lawrenson to resign as a director of Rotala.

Rotala added that neither Stuart Lawrenson, Michael Tackley or Paul Churchman will have any further connection with Rotala or any of its subsidiaries.

Where next for Rotala?

ROTALA suspended trading in its shares until it could release revised interim results for the six months to 30 September 2005. That statement is expected shortly after *CBW* closes for press – and will show larger losses across the group than anticipated.

Apart from this the company says it is happy with the current position: "The directors of Rotala are delighted to have agreed a very satisfactory outcome to this complicated issue with CPS of UK Ltd. We look forward to building on the initial platform we acquired without the distraction of such matters," says John Gunn.

It initially offered a package worth £4.65m for the company but will now pay between £2-2.5m. Kim Taylor is now in charge of the Flights Group day-to-day.

A spokesman for the company told *CBW* that, now it does not have any legal threat hanging over it, Flights is now in a good position. He says the company is now well financed and that from its point of view the terms of the settlement are not difficult to achieve.

As for further acquisitions, the company says it remains committed to its original strategy of building a group of integrated parking and transportation management companies but that it has not yet identified its next target.

Who's who at Rotala?

ROTALA is controlled by three directors – John Gunn, non-executive chairman; Nick Kennedy, non-executive director and Kim Taylor, now chief executive officer.

Gunn is currently a director of various quoted and unquoted companies but is best known – perhaps unfairly – for heading British and Commonwealth Shipping plc which went bust in 1990 after acquiring Atlantic Computers. Prior to this he built Exco International plc from a small money broker into the world's largest money broking company.

Since B&C he has built up a substantial portfolio of investment businesses specialising primarily in the engineering and high technology sectors through his family-owned investment firm Scheidegg Ltd. His interests have included a fuel cell company (Ceres Power) and a private corporate finance house (Ludgate 181 (Jersey) Ltd). In 2004 he was named as the City's 17th most influential financier in Business XL magazine's Top 50.

Nick Kennedy, 45, is a tax specialist with some experience in the transport support services sector having worked as international director – finance for Trans World Airlines. Kim Taylor, 49, is an accountant who started with KPMG before moving to Exco International in 1986 and was finance director from 1992-98. Since then he has been group finance director at Intercapital plc and Prebon Group Ltd.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, BARBICAN CENTRE, LONDON EC2

Join CBW at the schools transport conference of the year

IF you want to get inside the minds of local authorities and have your say on schools transport, you could do no better than come to the School Transport '06 conference.

CBW has teamed up with the London conference's organisers to offer readers discounted rates for this conference and another in late February which may well give your company a bottom-line return.

School Transport '06 – a major event for the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers – will hear from Government how its Education White Paper will impact on the future of the school bus, grow the market and help operators and education authorities deliver the quality which is being demanded by parents.

Staged at the Barbican Centre, the one-day event kicks off with a keynote speech from a senior figure in Government. On the agenda are talks from West Yorkshire PTE Metro's director of corporate services Sheena Pickersgill, Sian Thornthwaite, consultant with Halcrow Group and National Association of Head Teachers president John White

The final session will explore what can be done with concessionary fares schemes for children, a talk from Mike Ashworth, assistant director of network management and customer services for Derbyshire County Council.

Late afternoon, delegates will be able to join a seminar discussing bus services and school contracts. Alternatively, you can join discussions on supporting college students, or school travel plans.

09:50	Introduction and Welcome Conference. Chair: Tim Davies, Head of Transport Co-ordination Service, Devon County Council, and Immediate Past Chairman, ATCO
10:00	Keynote speech: Speaker to be confirmed10:20 Questions and Discussion
10:30	European Experiences: Troels Anderson, Transport Co-ordinator, Odense, Denmark
10:50	Questions and Discussion
11:00	Refreshments
11:30	The Comprehensive Approach to School Transport Provision: Sheena Pickersgill, Director of Corporate Services, Metro
11:50	Calculating Demand and Paying for Additional Services: Sian Thornthwaite, Consultant, Halcrow Group Ltd
12:10	Walking and Cycling Strategies: Paul Osborne, Director, Safe Routes to Schools Project
12:30	Innovative approaches to school travel plans ● Catherine Rawas, Development Manager, Walk21 ● Patricia Keyes, Co-Chair Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport ● Penny Jones, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport
13:00	Buffet Lunch
14:00	Integrated Transport Creating Choice and Opportunity for Students Case Study: New Forest Schools in Transport Network: Roger Lockwood, Increased Flexibility Manager, Co-ordinator for Regional 14-16 Collaborative Partnership, Brockenhurst College
14:20	Transport Provision for Extended Schools: John White, President, National Association of Head Teachers
14:30	Delivering Concessionary Fares Schemes for Young People: Mike Ashworth, Assistant Director, Network Management and Customer Services, Derbyshire County Council
14:45	Questions and Discussion
15:00	Chair's Comments

BUS CRIME EXPLORED

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, EARLS COURT ONE, LONDON

VANDALISM, violence and theft on buses are at an all-time high, so a conference on the subject was long overdue.

Earls Court One in London is the setting for Reducing Crime on Public Transport – a conference aimed at discussing and establishing best practice for operators and their contractors. The one-day event hears from, among others, British Transport Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and passenger transport associations on successes and failures in combating bus crime.

As with the school transport conference, there will be two sessions followed by a choice of seminars for operators to attend. The day includes refreshments and a buffet lunch.

● Full details of this conference next week

SEMINARS

Bus Services and School Contracts
Facilitator: Tim Davies
Speakers: Neil Holt, Assistant Director, Transport Coordination, Metro; Linda Howard, Managing Director, First Student 16-19 Options –

Supporting College Students Supporting Walking and Cycling Schemes
Facilitator: Paul Osborne, Director, Safe Routes to Schools Project
Speaker: Troels Anderson, Transport Co-ordinator, Odense, Denmar School

Travel Plans - Best Practice and Innovation Workshop
Facilitator: Catherine Rawas, Development Manager, Walk21
Speakers: Patricia Hayes, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport Penny Jones, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Education and Skills
16:20 Close of Conference

DISCOUNT FOR CBW READERS

THE full price for School Transport '06 is £395 plus VAT, but CBW readers can take advantage of a specially reduced rate by calling Natasha Wildman on 0207 324 4357, or applying for registration by email at *Natasha.wildman@neil-stewartassociates.co.uk* and quoting *'CBW'*

Reducing Crime on Publlic Transport normally costs £425 plus VAT, but again discounted rates can be obtained.

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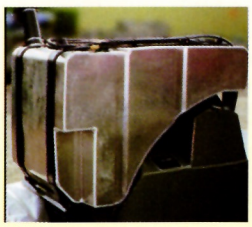

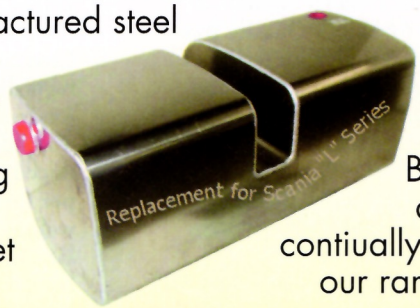

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REVIEW – PART THREE

CONCLUDING the week-by-week summary of major news stories of 2005, shows that the last four months covered three major bus and coach shows in Birmingham, Kortrijk and Dallas, with a host of new models being unveiled. Consolidation and re-organisation continued in the coach and bus industry, with some significant buying and selling.

On the operator front, Rush Travel of Newcastle, ended up in receivership, Redcrest travel crashed, and Arriva's Leaside Travel was wound up. The groups continued their onward march, with Stagecoach buying the Yorkshire Traction Group, selling its New Zealand operations and doing a deal with ComfortDelGro to share Scottish Citylink, Motorvator and Megabus Scotland. National Express Group purchased Spanish conglomerate ALSA, and sold Westbus of Heathrow to ComfortDelGro. Go-Ahead bought the Birmingham Coach Company. Smaller take-overs included Redwing's purchase of TWH coaches. Manufacturers Rohill UK and LDV failed, but a US conglomerate rescued LDV.

Dissatisfaction with local authorities increased, particularly with Kent CC, as ATCO warned that there was not enough money in the pot to subsidise local bus services.

The following is the third and final part of our review of the major news stories of 2006.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 1

The Kings Ferry was the first to introduce a wireless broadband system on its commuter coach.

Dorset County Council expanded its fleet with the purchase of four Scania 70-seat school buses.

First Aircoach took over vehicles and some drivers from Aerdart of Dublin, as Redcrest Holidays of Carlisle crashed.

New law covering the employment of illegal workers was explained.

Public Inquiry: Jacko's Travel of Barnsley.

Vehicle profile: Evobus Tourino

SEPTEMBER 8

Coach operators in Kent complained that the County Council-owned fleet was taking away their work.

Stagecoach's USA operators sent vehicles and supplies to help Hurricane Katrina victims

Mullany's Starline introduced a commuter service from Watford, competing with rail.

Insurers warned of the difficulty of obtaining seat-belted coaches in France in the event of a breakdown.

Public Inquiry: Kent Coach Travel.

Vehicle profiles: Evobus Euro 4 range

SEPTEMBER 15

MPs called for a return to re-regulation of bus services.

Travel Dundee signed the first Statutory Quality Bus partnership, with partners Dundee City Council and Scottish Executive.

Stagecoach linked up with ComfortDelGro to share out Scottish Citylink in return for Motorvator and Megabus in Scotland.

Public Inquiry: Paul's Travel of Hartlepool.

Vehicle profile: Plaxton Primo

SEPTEMBER 22

Disabled Rights groups fought for change to DDA guidelines.

Government cut the lead in time on Quality Contracts from 21 months to six.

Brian Souter admitted that the £1.2 billion purchase of Coach USA was a big mistake.

DTI launched a probe into the collapse of the Mayflower group.

Public Inquiry: B Line Travel of Carlton,

Technology profile: Passenger Transport Solutions

SEPTEMBER 29

Kimberley Coaches of Prudhoe started a service to Newcastle, competing against Arriva.

Dunn Line Travel posted interim profits up by 14%, and net debt down by £0.8m

Firstbus was dismissed from a Glasgow contract after failing to run a background check on a driver.

Rush Travel of Newcastle went into administration, but sister company RTL Travel and Tours continued

Public Inquiry: Huyton Travel,

Vehicle profile: Caetano Levante

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 6

Bath & North East Somerset Council aimed to introduce regulation on open-top services in the city.

Tappins of Didcot introduced a half-deck open topper for use on school runs as well as City Sightseeing.

Ken Livingstone and Stagecoach London launched an Enviro 400 decker which replaced the one destroyed by bombers.

Scania unveiled its Polish-built Omnicity double decker.

Legal News: Digital tachographs.

Technology profile: LOOK CCTV

OCTOBER 13

National Car parks announced the launch of an airport coaching subsidiary named Interline.

ADL Enviro 500 stole the show at EXPO 2005 in Dallas, and notched up significant new enquiries.

National Express Group purchased Spanish coach group ALSA for £262m, and sold Heathrow based Westbus to ComfortDelGro.

Network Colchester (a TGM subsidiary) and John Bridge carved up the remains of Supreme Coaches of Benfleet.

Public Inquiry: Courtney Coaches.

Vehicle profile: Coach & Bus Live show

OCTOBER 20

Kent County Council refused to release detailed accounts of its bus operation.

London firm Hackney Community Transport won15 buses worth of school work, in West Yorkshire.

Bowers Coaches of Chapel-en-le-Frith announced that it was pulling out of continental operation at the end of the year.

Less than a year after being rescued from administration, Rohill UK stopped trading

Public Inquiry: First Edinburgh and Midland Bluebird.

Operator profile: Bennett's Coaches of Gloucester

OCTOBER 27

Neoplan's Starliner won the Coach of the Year award at Busworld 2005 in Kortrijk.

Lancashire County Council gave a stay of execution over the withdrawal of Carnforth Connect services.

The Coach Centre of Accrington acquired Ronaldsway Coach business of Bacup, a month after buying Viscount Central

New legislation on Corporate Manslaughter was explained.

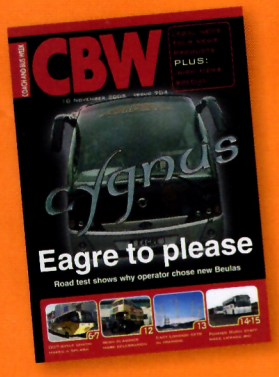
Public Inquiry: Bowers Coaches.

Vehicle profile: Busworld 2005 Kortrijk

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 3
Bebb's travel of Llantwit Fadre was acquired by Veolia (parent company of Connex)
Kent County Council imposed new rules on school bus contractors.
CPT and HM Customs drew up new rules to combat bootlegging.
Wrightbus pledged to create 170 new jobs after Government injection of £14.6m.
Public Inquiry: Hollins Travel (part 2).
Vehicle profile: Plaxton Primo

NOVEMBER 10
Reynolds Diplomat of Watford introduced LandCruise packages utilising budget airlines.
Irish 34 billion Euro transport plan offered much for road and rail, but little for bus and coach.
Quantity control rules in Bath Council TRC on open toppers were watered down
Transport for London saw bus revenues rise 14% and costs rise by 12% in 2004/05
Public Inquiry: A Coach of Newcastle.
Vehicle profile: Irisbus Eurorider



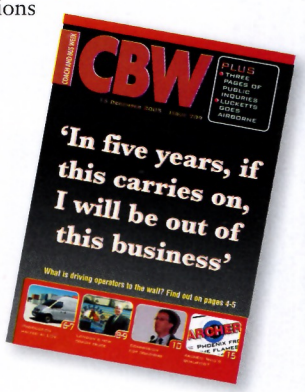
NOVEMBER 17
Irish crash case collapsed, after engineer's report on 'mystery power surges'.
Lucketts Coaches of Fareham bought Worthing Coaches, as Bluebird Vehicles bought the assets of Rohill (UK)
Stagecoach West Scotland was named Bus Operator of the Year
First's interim results showed an increase in turnover, a fall in profits, and an increase in debt
Legal News: Hazardous waste regulations.
Vehicle profile: Community Transport Association show

NOVEMBER 24
Stagecoach launched a new transport strategy for Manchester, after slating GMPTE's own submissions.
First Aircoach reported Northern Ireland operator Translink to the Office of Fair trading for denying it use of the Europa Bus Centre in Belfast.
Regional bus use continued to fall in the UK, but London bucked the trend with a 54% increase over the last decade.
Redwing Coaches of London took over neighbouring TWH Coaches.
Public Inquiry: Yateley Taxis and Mini Coaches.
Operator profile: National Express Coaches

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 1
CBW moved to new headquarters after leaving EMAP to join Rouncy Media
Government gave £7m to seven local authorities to start road pricing schemes.
Stagecoach sold its New Zealand bus operations for £95m.
Stagecoach unveiled its optically guided Road train concept for South Manchester.
Legal News: Alternative fuels.
Vehicle profile: Vauxhall Movano minibus

Go-Ahead Group purchased Birmingham Coach Company for £2.025m.
Stagecoach interim results showed an increase in turnover, fall in profits but an increase in net assets.
Public Inquiry: B.L. Travel of Hemsworth.
Technical profile: ZF Transmissions



DECEMBER 8
CPT called for a moratorium on new bus and coach legislation, until costs can be absorbed.
ATCO said that not enough money was being made available to Councils to subsidise bus services
Department of Transport disclaimed responsibility over South East Trains which was pricing against Reliance Travel of Gravesend.
Malta-built aquatic coach snapped up orders from all over the world.
Public Inquiry: John Smith & Sons of Dalton, Thirsk.
Vehicle profile: MAN buses and coaches

DECEMBER 15
Eurocrats were set to force digital tachographs through by next May.
Coach operators gave a cautious welcome to new London 'Coach Concordat'.

DECEMBER 22
Stagecoach bought Yorkshire Traction Group in a £37m deal.
Dublin Buses took delivery of the first European Enviro500s on Volvo B9 tri-axle chassis.
Transport minister proposes changes to operator licensing system.
New backer emerged for LDV, after one hour in administration, with the Pilot and Convoy models to be withdrawn.
Public Inquiry: Forward Fast of Sampford Peverell.
Vehicle profile: Eneco Hybrids

Eminox ready to pounce

Exhaust firm set to capitalise on widespread introduction of low emission zones across Europe

MARTIN COLE, TECHNICAL AND MINIBUS EDITOR

EMINOX is ready to make the most of European pollution legislation for buses and coaches.

One of the best known brand names in commercial vehicle exhaust systems, Eminox is gearing up for supplying aftermarket Continuously Regenerating Trap (CRT) filters to transport operators across the continent.

Moves by governments and local authorities to reduce emissions – in line with European legislation – is beginning to see the introduction of low emission zones (LEZs) where only vehicles with guaranteed low-emission engines will be able to operate.

'This is definitely more cost-effective than upgrading older vehicles with new engines'

Mike Galey, Eminox marketing director

Certain authorities may dictate any vehicle with exhaust output not meeting Euro II or even Euro III will be unable to operate within the LEZ. For new buses or coaches this will not be a problem but it means older vehicles will have to remain outside the zone unless they have been issued with a Reduced Pollution Certificate (RPC) certifying their emissions are within the requirements.

Upgrading engines and drivelines to a modern specification sounds straightforward – but in practice it is unlikely to be a cost effective exercise given the residual value of the existing vehicle and the major changes required in the on-board electrics to handle the diagnostic requirements demanded in the forthcoming implementation of Euro IV regulations.

However, Eminox has been involved in trials – data from which will be available shortly – showing a Euro II specification engine equipped with a catalyst and CRT system is better on particulate emissions than a Euro IV engine without the addition of a CRT.

CRT systems are a registered product with the Government-backed Energy Saving Trust's Powershift programme and, as such, qualify for grant funding.

Although this can assist with capital cost involved the present grant scheme is now hopelessly over-subscribed. It ran out of money two years ago and this year's allocation was already spent before it arrived.

The same situation is likely to occur again in 2006. Partial failure of the scheme seems to doing more harm than a total failure because many operators are in a virtual no-man's land – unsure whether they will get any assistance towards their purchases. Many others are holding back on ordering products because they suspect no funding will be made available – or that some will get funding and others won't – creating an unfair marketplace.

CRT costs, while not cheap at roughly £3,500 each, at least offer a more realistic upgrade than a complete re-powering exercise and each fitment to a Euro II vehicle or above will qualify the specific vehicle for its RPC and enable it to run in designated LEZs – improving fleet utilisation and reducing the pressure to purchase new vehicles to meet compliance.

Many transport operations have sought to go down this route. French operator RATP is said to be retro-fitting 3,000 buses in Paris and another major scheme is about to start in Madrid.

Eminox has just opened a regional office in France and employed five people initially to cater for what appears to be a developing market with huge potential.

Many manufacturers are fitting Eminox systems as original equipment and others offer it as an option. The company has just secured all OEM fit on Irisbus for SCRT systems on the whole of its Euro IV and Euro V production.

SCRT is the Eminox version devised for selective catalytic reduction which removes up to 87% of NOx from the exhaust gas and incorporates a filter to remove the particulate matter.

Trials with buses have shown very positive results for the SCRT system and Eminox has had examples running with London operators for some time. The installation on a typical Dart midibus has been engineered to take up little more space than standard equipment plus a CRT unit, an AdBlue pump, AdBlue tank and some additional wiring and pipework.

Results show considerable reductions in emissions and the levels have been extremely reliable. Eminox can monitor its performance and emissions remotely via satellite transmissions. This allows real-time monitoring of the system's performance and has even allowed Eminox to inform the operator when its drivers or fuellers have neglected to put AdBlue in the tank.

Eminox has grown steadily as the business developed and now employs 230 people. Last year it achieved a turnover of £30m.

Based in Gainsborough, the

on green laws

company's systems are now designed in its technical centre in Gothenburg but the research and development centre remains in Gainsborough alongside the production facility. Customer services have recently been expanded with the introduction of a filter cleaning and service centre in Stoke.

Eminox created a holding company called Hexadex which acts as the controlling body for Eminox and its associated businesses which were acquired over the course of its development.

They include Teconnex Ltd – a manufacturing business specialising in the production of exhaust clamps and fasteners – and Swenox which is a Swedish manufacturer producing high-volume (45,000pa) application exhaust systems mainly to OEMs. Swenox supplies most of Scania's standard exhaust systems and around 30% of Volvo's requirements. Eminox itself remains dedicated wholly to aftermarket applications.

Marketing director Mike Galey is enthusiastic about the future for the company as global markets have shown signs of opening up as concerns for the environment escalate.

He said: "The growth of interest in creating low emission zones in sensitive areas like congested city centres means only new diesel-fuelled buses will be able to function there unless they have proven and certified exhaust aftertreatment systems.

"We can offer a very effective solution to market and this is definitely more cost-effective than upgrading older vehicles with new engines."

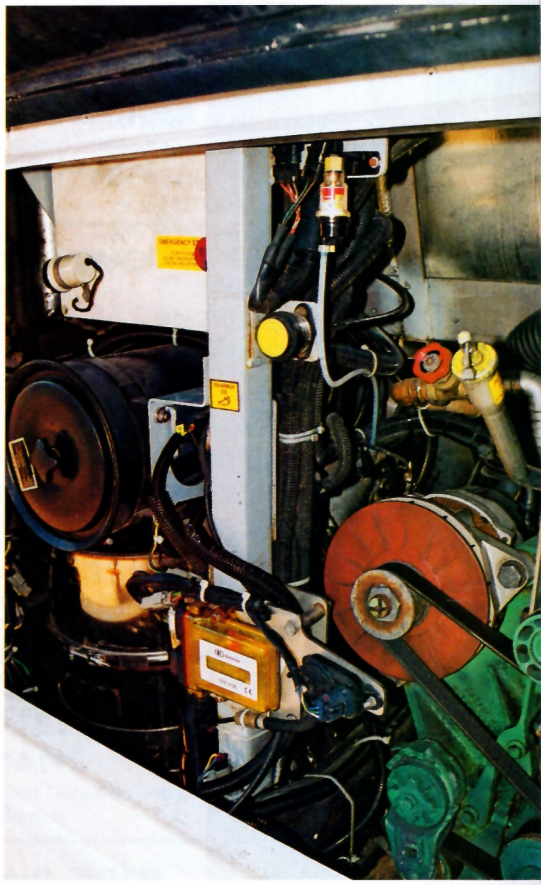
The availability of a cost-effective solution will also favour national and local governments, local and public transport authorities and legislators and planners as it will allow them to introduce LEZs much faster than if they are forced to wait until operators can afford to invest in sufficient numbers of new buses.

For practical reasons it will also have benefits where older vehicles, cascaded onto suburban or rural duties and used for bringing passengers into the LEZ city centres, will not be required to stop at the edge of the zone and force their passengers to transfer onto new, low-emission buses serving the LEZ alone.

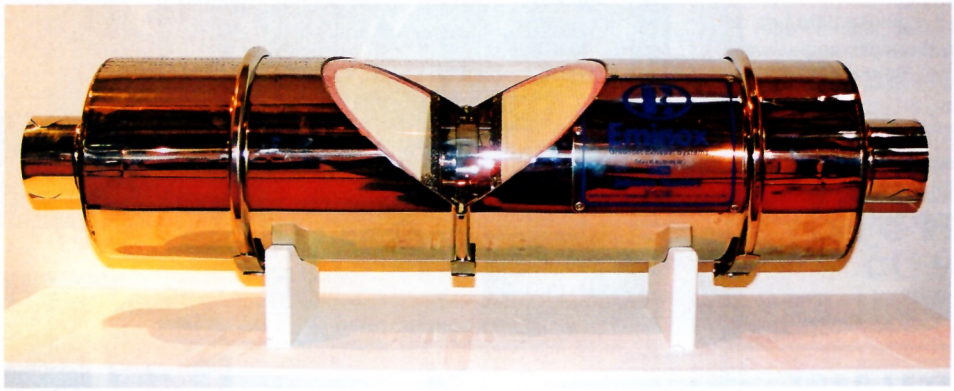
A number of UK operators are already considering raising their profiles by fitting CRTs to their vehicles and running with RPC certificates as a means to offering lower polluting and environmentally friendly services to passengers.

They see exhaust aftertreatment as a means to achieve high standards throughout their fleets at a much earlier point than natural replacement cycles would allow capital purchases to do the same job.

An SCRT system and monitoring equipment installed in a dart



Cutaway display model of an Eminox CRT filter system



An Eminox CRT catalyst element

Fragile filter core is swathed in a soft but durable liner before insertion into the stainless steel casing

ARRIVA MAKES THE WRIGHT DECISION

New £4.5 fleet for Runcorn and Widnes launched with a fanfare

ARRIVA North West and Wales launched a brand new £4.5m fleet of buses in Runcorn and Widnes this week, as it upgraded some of the local network with better frequencies, and converted its entire Runcorn depot operations to low floor.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport; Derek Twigg MP, member for Halton, and Bob Hind, Arriva's managing director launched the first of 39 buses, which operate services to Chester, Warrington, Liverpool and John Lennon Airport.

The new Wright Cadet bodied VDL SB120 39 seaters, are trimmed in Arriva's latest corporate colours, and have been adventurously branded with an eye-catching 'Strider' local network branding. They are fitted with CCTV for added safety and security, a feature which is rapidly being extended to the rest of the 1,400 buses in the fleet. In addition the remaining 20 Scania buses at Runcorn, which operate busway services, are being extensively refurbished as part of the investment package.

Service improvements include the addition of commercial evening and Sunday services, and the ramping up of frequencies, some of which will operate every ten minutes at peak. Mr Hind said that the company operated nearly 120 buses on evening and Sunday services in Liverpool, and the commercial facilities were now being extended eastwards.

"We have found that by running services into the evening, it helps to improve daytime loadings, because not everyone wants to come back before 6 pm. As far as Sunday services are concerned, they have shown real growth and have been the saving of bus operators."

He said that customer satisfaction levels in the area had improved by 16% in the last year to the point where two out of every three passengers were either extremely satisfied or very satisfied.

"This is a hugely significant investment for the Halton area, which underlines our commitment to high-quality bus travel for the people of Widnes, Runcorn and surrounding areas. Arriva is always looking at ways to make bus travel more accessible and we hope that this positive step will be well received by our existing customers, as well as tempting some new ones on board."

Arriva MD Bob Hind, right, told guests evening services helped to spread the load

MP Derek Twigg, above, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, launched the first of Arriva's new 39-seaters

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1969 AEC REGENT 5
Park Royal body, current class 6 MoT, ideal wedding bus, only to a good home!

1995 M REG VOLVO B6
ZF Gearbox, Volvo engine, Alexander body 40 seats large choice. These buses are a good opportunity to buy modern buses at reasonable prices.

1996 N REG VOLVO OLYMPIAN,
Northern Counties body, single door, 73 seats.

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1994 L REG VOLVO B6'S,
Volvo engines, ZF gearboxes, Plaxton bodies, 40 seats, good tests.

1999 T REG DAF SB3000
Ikarus 396/50 body, air con, toilet, continental door, 49 seats

1997 P REG DAF SB3000
Ikarus 396/50 body, 53 seater, CD & video

1999 T REG DAF SB3000
Plaxton Premiere 350, 53 seater

1991 K LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Cummins L10/ZF, 78 seaters, low height, good tests

1987 E REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Gardner 6LXB/Hydracyclic, Optare body, 76 seats, good tests

1992 VOLVO B10M/ VAN HOOL ALIZEE
Automatic, air-con, double glazed, retrimmed, belted, toilet, video, new MoT

1997/8 R REG DENNIS DARTS SLF,
Cummins/Allison, Plaxton Pointer 2 bodies, 36 seats

1989 G REG LEYLAND TIGER
TL11 engine, ZF 6 speed manual gearbox, Plaxton 3200, 53 seater, test 06/06

1997 P REG VOLVO OLYMPIANS,
Alexander bodies, 2 doors, 68 seats, or can be single doored and upseated to 78

1983/4 LEYLAND TIGERS, PLAXTON SUPREME BODIES,
recent retrims, belts, superb condition for age.

1990 DENNIS CONDORS,
Arriving now from Hong Kong. Cummins L10 engines, Voith 3 speed auto gearboxes, tinted windows, full air-con throughout, 94 seats with 2 doors or 95 with single door conversion. Refurbished to Firstgroup spec 4 years ago. Limited number available.

1989 G REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Cummins L10/ZF, Northern Counties body, 2 doors, 75 seats

1988 LEYLAND TIGER
Repowered with Volvo THD engine, Plaxton 3500, 51 seats, toilet, good condition, private plate

1986/7 LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Gardner/hydracyclic, ECW semi-low height bodies, 68 seats, long tests, some single door, 72 seaters also available, from £7000

1997 P REG MERCEDES 711D
Crystals conversion, 19 seats with wheelchair ramp, automatic

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Y REG TOYOTA HIACE

2.4 DIESEL,5 SPEED ,PAS, MEDIUM WHEEL BASE, LOW ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 3 SEATS 7 TWO WHEEL CHAIR POSITIONS,Q-SRAINT RESTRAINT SYSTEM, RICON FULLY AUTOMATIC TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER MINT CONDITION , 33,000 miles

Y REG 2001 VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

2.5TDI AUTOMATIC, POWERED STEERING, MWB, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 5 SEATS PLUS 1 WHEEL CHAIR, UNWIN TRACKING, WITH SIDE MOUNTED RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, MINT CONDITION, 33,000 MILES

1999 T REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DEISEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, L W B, EUROMOTIVE CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 11 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, 52,000 MILES. V GOOD CONDITION , ONE OWNER

X REG 2000 VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

2.5TDI AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION PAS, LWB, HIGH ROOF, SLD,4 SEATS PLUS 1 OR 2 WHEEL CHAIR, Q-STRAINT WHEELCHAIR RESRAINT SYSTEM, RICON TAILLIFT ,ONE OWNER, MINT CONDITION ,39,500 miles

2000 V REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DEISEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, L W B, EXCEL CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION , ONE OWNER

51 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT28

2.5 TURBO DIESEL, PAS, SHORT WHEEL BASE, LOW ROOF, TWIN SIDE LOADING DOORS WITH STEP,8 PASSENGER HIGH BACK SEATS WITH HEADREST, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 36,000 MILES. IDEAL TAXIS

X REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DEISEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, HIGH ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION , ONE OWNER

2001 Y REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER

T REG IVECO 59.12

2.8 DIESEL TURBO, SEMI AUTOMATIC, MELLOR COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 16 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, PLS FULLY AUTOMATIC TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, LOW MILES 66,000 KMS

2003 03 REG RENAULT TRAFFIC 100

1.9 DCI, 5 SPEED ,PAS, SHORT WHEEL BASE, O & H CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 5 SEATS PLUS 1 WHEEL CHAIR, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER MINT CONDITION ,18,000 miles

T REG 1999 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 15 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, SLIDING DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 48,000 MILES

X REG 2000 LDV CONVOY

2.5 DIESEL TURBO, 5 SPEED MANUAL,UVG COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 16 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY

02 REG RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.5DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, EUROMOTIVE CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 10 SEATS , GLIDE RITE LOWERING SUSPENSION WITH FOLD OUT RAMP, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 64,000 MILES

51 REG 2001 RENAULT MASTER

T35, 2.5 ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, MELLOR CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 14 SEATS OR 10 PLUS 2 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, MINT CONDITION , 33,000 MILES

52 REG RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, EUROMOTIVE CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 12 SEATS, GLIDE RITE LOWERING SUSPENSION WITH FOLD OUT RAMP, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 55,000 MILES

03 REG 2003 RENAULT MASTER

T35, 2.5 ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, MELLOR CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 14 SEATS OR 10 PLUS 2 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, MINT CONDITION , 30,000 MILES

2002 52 REG FORD TRANSIT 350

LONG WHEEL BASE, TURBO DIESEL, AUTOMATIC, PAS, HIGH ROOF SIDE ENTRY DOOR WITH STEP,12 HIGH BACK SEATS ,UNWIN TRACKING FOR 2 W/CHAIRS RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, VERY LOW MILES 5500 MILES

2001 Y REG FIAT DUCATO

ROHILL TRIAXLE COACHBUILT, 2.8 TURBO DIESEL,PAS, AIR OPERATED SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH LOW ENTRY , 16 HIGH BACK SEATS , GLIDE RITE LOWERING SUSPENSION FOLD OUT PORTARAMP, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 48,500 MILES

NEW UN REGISTERED, IVECO 50.C13

2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 16 SEATS. SLAM OR POWER PLUG DOOR, HIGH ROOF ,BONDED WINDOWS , M2 FLOOR, M2 HIGH BACK SEATS UNWIN TRACKING, HEATER, NEW UNDERFLOOR PLS TAIL LIFT, NEW CONVERSION.

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NON WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE – MINI BUSES

04 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

MWB, 2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP,PAS, ADVACED CONVERSION, SLD, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS + DRIVER, REAR BULK HEAD FITTED WITH MICROWAVE AND HANDWASH REAR STORAGE AREA WITH HAND WASH AND TOOL STORAGE, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

04 REG 2004 RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.2DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, AIR BAGS, ABS, LONG WHEEL BASE, MELLOR CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR , 17 M1 TESTED SEATS FITTED TO M1 TESTED FLOOR EX LEASE MINT CONDITION , LOW MILES

52 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT46

2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP,PAS, STANFORD CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP,17 HIGH BACK SEATS WITH HEAD REST, EX LOCAL COUNCIL ONLY 39,000 KMS. COIF.

02 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP,PAS,LUXURY SPEC FRANK GUY CONVERSION, TWIN SLD'S, TINTED WINDOWS , 10 HIGH BACK SEATS,OVER HEAD LOCKERS, WITH AIR & LAMPS REAR STORAGE AREA, EBERSPACHER CLIMATE CONTROL, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

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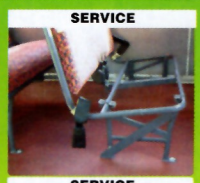

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Key will be excellent communication and presentation skills as the role liaises with Transport for London senior managers and our suppliers on complex technical issues. The Technical Engineer will also deliver training workshops across all levels of our engineering team, will make presentations to the board and will carry out other ad hoc duties.

If you feel that you are the right candidate for the role, please forward your CV with a covering letter quoting ref LUB280 to:

Anna-Marie Harvey, HR Department, London United Busways Ltd, Busways House, Wellington Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 5NX.

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To apply on-line for this vacancy please visit **www.tfl.gov.uk/jobs** If you do not have access to the internet, please call **0800 0155 072** and speak to a member of our Recruitment Team. Please quote Ref: TfL1614.

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EVENTS DIARY

2006

January 14:
Excursions 2006 tourism exhibition, Alexandra Palace, North London. *www.excursions.org.uk*

January 26:
School Transport 06 Conference, Barbican Centre, London. Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, with *CBW* media partnership. Details on 0207 324 4330, *www.neilstewartassociates.com/st125* or fax 0207 490 8830.

January 26:
CPT Annual Dinner, Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London. Clare Kehoe on 020 7240 3131, e-mail *clarek@cpt-uk.org*

February 13-17:
CPT Scotland Portugal Study Tour. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk*

February 28:
Reducing Crime on Public Transport Conference, Earls Court One, London. *CBW* media partner. Contact 020 7324 4330, *www.neilstewartassociates.com/li226* for registration, or fax 0207 490 8830

March 1-2:
British Travel Trade Fair, NEC Birmingham.

March 8-9:
Moving On Conference, Crown Plaza Hotel, Glasgow, *www.moving-on-conference.co.uk*, or tel: 0191 241 4523 *www.britishtraveltradefair.com*

March 14-16:
International Road Transport Union 30th World Congress, Dubai World Trade Centre. *www.iru.org*

April 4:
London Transport Awards Dinner, London Hilton. 01224 263134

April 7-9:
Coach Tourism Council/ Bonded Coach Holidays Conference 2006, Llandudno, North Wales. 01227 762200 or email *david.smith@coachtourismcouncil.com*

April 22/23:
UK Coach Rally, Brighton

April 24-26:
CPT Scotland Annual Conference, Gleneagles. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk*

April 25/27:
CV Show, NEC, Birmingham

May 8/10:
ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Details: Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.

May 21-28:
CPT Study Tour 2006, Singapore/ Kuala Lumpur. Details on 0207 240 3131

October 10-13:
CTA Event, G-Mex, Manchester. *www.communitytransport.com,* or call 0870 774 3586

November 7-9:
Euro Bus Expo, NEC. 0870 224 8619, *eurobusxpo@expom.co.uk*

November 24-25:
Coach and Bus Show 2006, RDS, Dublin. Contact *www.cttc.ie, c.collins.cttc@ioi.ie*

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Held annually, over two days at the NEC Birmingham in March, British Travel Trade Fair is organised by Reed Travel Exhibitions, global leaders in travel trade exhibitions on behalf of VisitBritain in conjunction with VisitScotland, the Wales Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland.

British Travel Trade Fair would like to thank Redwing Coaches for their help and contribution to this years' creative theme.

Getting a Handel on young hooligans

FULL marks to the north east for initiative – Derwentside Council and Durham Police are extending a policy of broadcasting loud classical music in public places to deter yobbism.

Stanley Bus Station is the latest place to benefit from a blast of Bach, which apparently deters teenagers from gathering in such places to enjoy such dubious pleasures as getting blind drunk, smoking, spitting and declaring their lust for one another in indelible pen on the walls.

The Newcastle Metro enjoyed a 25% fall in violent offences and 20% drop in vandalism the first year it battered passengers with Beethoven. Swapping muzac for Mozart – apart from the good taste it exhibits – clearly has a positive effect on yobs. But we should caution others that this may not last.

Anyone who recalls the film A Clockwork Orange will remember that Alex and his violent pals worshipped classical composers and their music.

You may also recall that the State's answer was harrowing aversion therapy for Alex to turn him against violence, sex and his favourite music.

We're worried that we might end up with the reverse – a generation which associates classical music with having yobbish fun in public areas.

Still, at least the tunes blasting from the 'pimped' Citroen Saxos will start to improve....

2 Minute Interview

FULL NAME: "Archer the Column" (in Wales at least!)
AGE: Close to pensionable
OCCUPATION: Transport manager, CBW columnist and diligent observer of our industry
WHAT SHAPE IS THE COACH AND BUS INDUSTRY IN? Buckling under an avalanche of ill-thought out legislation and in danger of becoming far too introspective as a result
WHAT ANNOYS YOU MOST ABOUT IT? Local authority staff who think they know how to run it better than we do ourselves
WHO, IF ANYONE, WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDUSTRY, AND WHY? Ben Goodfellow of Sheffield United Tours, for almost single-handedly facing down ABTA over 'Operation Stabiliser' in the 1960s (a plan to dragoon coach operators into ABTA membership whether they liked it or not)
WHICH EVENT OF THE LAST 50 YEARS HAS CAUSED IT THE MOST DAMAGE? Undoubtedly Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973
WHAT WAS THE PROUDEST MOMENT IN YOUR WORKING LIFE? Proving Ron Whittle wrong at a CPT meeting
WHAT'S THE PUNCHLINE OF YOUR FAVOURITE JOKE? "You didn't expect to get all of that for thirty bob did you?"
WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE AS PASSENGERS ON A LONG JOURNEY? Any of the Traffic Commissioners, for an extensive captive tutorial on what our industry's really like at the sharp end
AND WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO BE HEADING? Anywhere with a better winter climate than the British Isles

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CBW's website, cbwnet, is pushing the barriers of what we can offer the industry.

The classified vehicle advertising on cbwnet is the UK's ONLY website on which operators can not only place advertising direct, but can search for vehicles by chassis, body or price.

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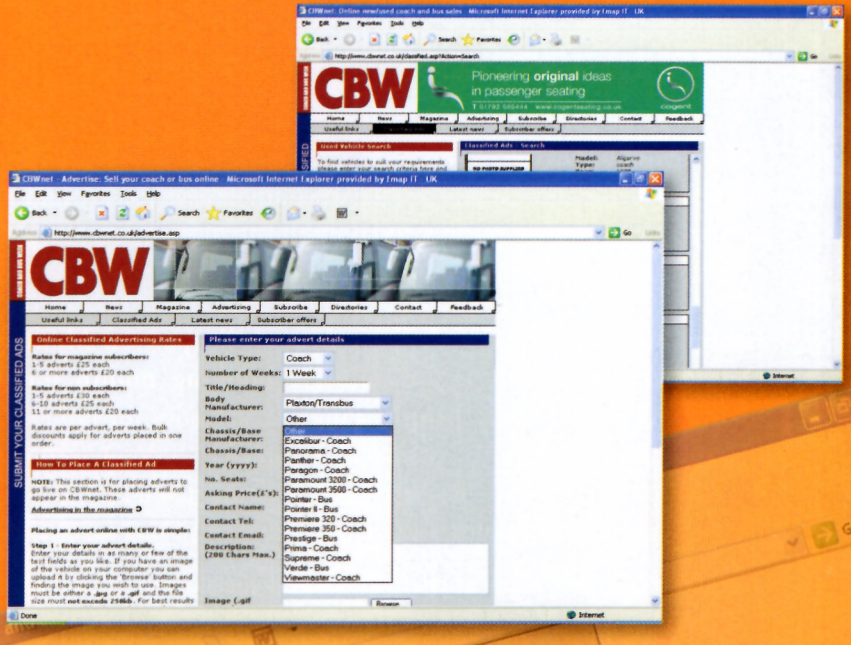
And there's more to come. We aren't standing still. The website will be developed further, and will have more innovation as time goes on.



WWW.CBWNET.CO.UK

Ascot

Back in the Saddle for 2006

In October 2005, it was confirmed that the Royal Meeting would return to its Berkshire home in 2006 following an eighteen month, £185 million redevelopment programme, the most extensive project of its type ever seen in Europe. The Royal Meeting will run from Tuesday 20th to Saturday 24th June 2006.

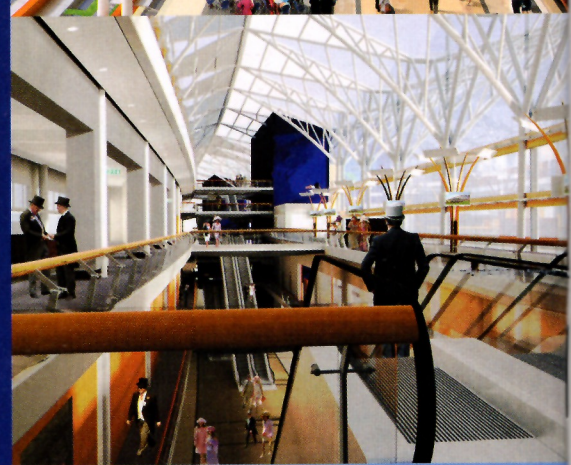
The focal point of the redevelopment is undoubtedly the new Grandstand itself. The distinctive design is defined by the spectacular parasol roof suspended on 'structural trees'. The stand is flooded with natural light, using glass and aluminium materials, bringing the outside in as you walk through the impressive galleria. The new Grandstand with its state-of-the-art facilities, will be second to none. The racecourse track has also been redeveloped and Ascot is proud to host racing in 2006 on a world class racing surface.

There are 20 racing fixtures at Ascot in 2006, from the tradition of Royal Ascot, to the prestige of Diamond Day in July. Family days are held in the summer months, the Ascot Festival runs in September and a celebrated Christmas meeting is in the diary to complete the year.

With up to 25% discount for group bookings of ten or more and free parking at most race days, guided tours of the racecourse, free entry for all licensed coach drivers and free entry for all children aged 16 and under – a day out at Ascot Racecourse is fantastic value for money.

Group bookings of ten or more are given a warm welcome at Ascot. For Royal Ascot Tuesday, there is a 25% discount and tickets are only £40pp in the General Admission area and only £11pp in the Silver Ring. Group tickets outside of Royal Ascot begin at £10.50pp.

Group Bookings for Royal Ascot 2006 will open on Monday 5th December 2005. This is an exclusive booking month for group bookers of ten or more people. Public ticket sales for groups of less than ten commence on Tuesday 3rd January 2006. Customers are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment as a high demand for tickets is expected and only a limited number of tickets are available.

To guarantee your place at the world's best racecourse, please call **0870 727 1234** or visit the Groups section of the website at **www.ascot.co.uk**, to find out full details of fixtures, prices and hospitality packages.

We look forward to welcoming you to Ascot Racecourse in 2006 to celebrate the start of a new era at the world's most famous racecourse and home of the world's greatest race meeting, Royal Ascot.